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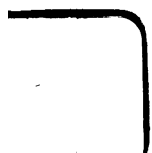
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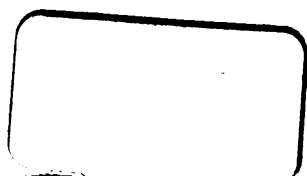
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Great Britain - Hist., Juvenile

FRONTISPIECE.

Vol. I.



Hopwood sculp.

Elizabeth, Queen of Edward IV giving
up her Son to the Lord Cardinal.

9025

See Vol. I. page 160.

9021

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THE
HISTORY OF ENGLAND,

RELATED IN

Familiar Conversations,

BY

A FATHER TO HIS CHILDREN:

INTERSPERSED WITH

MORAL AND INSTRUCTIVE REMARKS AND OBSERVATIONS

ON THE

MOST LEADING AND INTERESTING SUBJECTS.

DESIGNED FOR THE PERUSAL OF YOUTH.

BY ELIZABETH HELME.

CONTINUED TO THE GENERAL PEACE, IN THE YEAR 1814.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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PREFACE.

AS I considered the study of History one of the leading steps in the education of youth, I have endeavoured to propose and compile a work, which, at an early age, may render historical subjects familiar, and by a faint outline, impress the memory sufficiently, to awaken a desire, as they advance in years, to peruse at large the annals of their country.

Of the virtues of our British monarchs, I have spoken as I felt them: of their errors I have done the same,

for as great qualities accompanied by virtue dignify a king far more than his crown, so doth vice degrade him even below the meanest of his subjects, who not possessing the same advantages, cannot receive so heavy a condemnation.

Every situation in life has its peculiar duties ; the great to be worthy stewards of the ~~the~~ ^{wealth} entrusted to their care, and to set their inferiors examples of both those public and domestic virtues which are the bonds of society in a well regulated state ; the poor to be content with the situation allotted them, or by a praiseworthy industry to endeavour to amend it ; in their domestic circle, to fulfil their respective claims ; and in their public duties to be loyal subjects, and honest and just men.

The Discovery of America, as written in the German by Campe, furnished me with the plan of this work, as I considered that casual interruptions rendered the subjects lighter, and the domestic conversations more interesting to children.



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THE

HISTORY OF ENGLAND,

&c. &c. &c.

CONVERSATION I.

"I AM sorry it rains, Charles," said Anne Wilmot to her brother, "had it been fine, my father and mother promised us a long walk this afternoon." Anne had just attained her thirteenth year; Charles had nearly completed his fifteenth, and possessed more reflection than many boys of that age. "My dear sister," replied he, "the walk is only delayed; it will be equally pleasant any other fair day; in the interval you will find sufficient means to amuse yourself: you can have recourse to your books, your music, or your work: John, after his lessons, will play at ball, or bat, and our dear little Frances will arrange her house, and dress her doll."

"Indeed, brother," answered John, "poor Frances and I are very little obliged to you: because I am but nine, and she only seven, you think we can do nothing but play; but I hope when we are as old as you, we shall have learned as much. To be sure, I am very sorry we cannot walk this afternoon, but I shall neither play at bat nor ball—papa and mamma are alone, and we shall be sent for presently; then you will see I have contrived a scheme."

"And I will assist you, John," answered Frances, "be what it will. I don't care a pin for playthings. I had rather by half look at the pictures in the great book in my papa's library."

Charles caught up his sister, and kissing her, replied, "Pardon me, John, and you too, dear Frances; I only meant to amuse you; I myself wished for a game at play this afternoon."

"Oh, then," said John, "I am ready; the balls are in the lobby, and we can play till papa sends for us."

"Do so," said Anna. "In the mean-

time Frances and I will devise some entertainment that may pass the time equally to our liking."

The parties were hardly arranged before a servant came to inform them that their parents required their company; an information so welcome, that every other subject was banished from their thoughts.

Entering the parlour, after some casual conversation, Charles good humouredly informed his parents of the offence he had given his brother and younger sister.

"As the affront was unintentional, it merited no displeasure," replied Mrs. Wilmot, scarcely repressing a smile; "had it been otherwise, I do not wonder at a little anger arising at the supposition, that John and Frances were only to be amused with toys."

"True," answered Mr. Wilmot, "for John already performs his exercises well, as you inform me Frances does her lessons. But John, I understand, said as we were alone, *he* had a scheme: tell me, my dear boy, frankly what it is."

“ It was only, papa, that you or mamma would tell us a story, as you have sometimes done, to amuse us.”

“ Willingly,” replied Mr. Wilmot; “ but what subject would you choose?”

“ Nay, papa, if you are kind enough to oblige us, that we leave to you,” answered he.

“ Not so; I like to collect your different opinions, therefore give me yours.”

“ Charles shall speak first then, papa, or else I shall think he does not forget my being peevish.”

“ Justly observed,” answered Mr. Wilmot; “ give us your choice, Charles; your brother and sister will be equally candid.”

“ Then, Sir,” answered Charles, “ I prefer history; but the decision ought, I think, to be left to John.”

“ No, no,” replied John, hastily, “ Anne shall speak next, and then I and Frances.”

“ I join in Charles’s opinion,” answered Anne, “ but shall be satisfied with any other subject.”

“ Now, John, what say you?” inquired Mr. Wilmot.

“ Why, papa, to own the truth, I like stories of warriors, battles, and great men, who have done noble and valiant actions.”

“ And that is surely history—but come, Frances, we wait your opinion.”

“ Dear papa, I love stories of kings and queens, and accounts of fine things, and of wild beasts.”

“ With kings and queens I think I can accommodate you,” replied he, “ but of wild beasts my stock of stories are very few. I will however relate to you a history which will nearly combine all your tastes in one ; for it shall be interspersed with warriors, battles, and great and valiant actions. Kings and queens shall also dignify the scene : some who spread blessings, peace, and honour, over their kingdoms; and others who must supply the deficiency of wild beasts, resembling them by their steps being marked with desolation, cruelty, blood, and ruin.”

"Dear papa," said John, "that will do exactly; but what is it called?"

"It is called," replied Mr. Wilmot, "*The History of England*. Charles and Anne are already acquainted with it, but no one can be too well informed of the history of his own country. What say you; shall I begin?"

"I don't think, papa," said Frances, "I shall like the history of England, for I have heard John read the beginning of it to you."

"Well then," answered Mr. Wilmot, "I will only enter upon it this afternoon: if John and you do not approve it, we will proceed no farther."

"Thank you, papa," replied John, "pray begin."

"As soon as you please; but observe, I expect you to interrupt me with questions when any thing occurs that you do not entirely comprehend. I shall begin the history from the invasion of the Romans, before which period Britain was but little known to the rest of the world.

I must however first give you some short account of the customs, manners, and religion of the natives."

Mr. Wilmot made a short pause, when John and Frances drawing their chairs close to him, he began.

Account of the Britons and the Invasion of the Romans.

"The coast of Britain opposite Gaul was inhabited by foreign traders, who, finding the situation convenient for their commerce, at length settled there, and cultivating the country round them, in time became masters of the parts where they at first had only been suffered to reside.

"The natives dwelt inland, and held no communication with the intruders; they lived in rude built cottages, and fed upon flesh procured by hunting, or the milk of their herds. What little clothing they wore was made of the skins of beasts,

but their arms, legs, and thighs were naked, and usually painted blue.

“ Their beards were close shaved, or cut, except on their upper lip, but their hair was suffered to grow long, and fall upon their shoulders.”

“ Dear, papa,” said Frances, “ they must look very frightful ; and in winter must suffer greatly from cold.”

“ Custom reconciles our sight, my dear child, to objects that at the first view appear repugnant to us ; how much more in this instance, where they knew no other ; and for cold, accustomed to be uncovered, their bodies felt as little as does your face, which, from the same cause, is the least susceptible of your whole person.”

“ That is very true, papa ; pray go on.”

“ They were pagans,” resumed Mr. Wilmot, “ or worshippers of idols ; and their priests, which were called Druids, dwelt in caves, woods, or hollow trees, feeding on acorns and wild berries, but by the simplicity and severity of their man-

ners commanded universal respect and obedience.

“ To counterbalance this simplicity of living, they inculcated the most gross superstition, and sacrificed human victims, whom they burned even in multitudes in the bodies of their idols, which were composed of wicker-work.

“ Their money was of brass, or iron rings, of various weight, with which they trafficked with each other for different commodities.

“ The country was divided into various parts, each under a chief, and in great danger, a general commander was chosen to direct the whole. In battle they used chariots with sharp instruments fixed at the ends of the axle-trees, and which, driving against their antagonists, spread destruction around.

“ The warriors fought both on foot and on horseback ; hardy from the simplicity of their lives, their courage was great, but in victory they were unac-

quainted with mercy, and in defeat were too unstable for perseverance.

“ Such, my children, were the Britons in their rude but independent state; and from whom I shall now revert to the Romans. Cæsar, having over-run Gaul, turned his thoughts to Britain, as an easy conquest; and, embarking his troops, he reached the coast of Dover; but the islanders, informed of his intention, were prepared to receive him. They had chosen Cassibelanus for their leader, and the rocks and cliffs were covered with armed men, prepared to oppose the invaders. The dissensions of party, however, defeated their purpose; the petty princes threw off their allegiance; and while some submitted to Cæsar, others fled into the interior part of the island, so that, reduced by so many desertions, Cassibelanus was forced to yield, and acknowledge submission. This event happened about fifty-one years before the birth of Christ.

“ After the death of Cæsar, who was slain in the senate-house, his successor,

Augustus, formed a design to visit Britain, but was prevented by a revolt of the Pannonians. Tiberius made no attempt, and the natives, from the intercourse which had taken place, began to cast off the grossest part of their barbarism.

“ Caligula threatened Britain, but his threats were empty, and tended only to disgrace himself; but in the reign of Claudius an expedition was formed against it with the success that usually attended the Roman arms.

“ Caractacus was the first noble Briton who stood forward to rescue his country from the invaders, and for nine years harassed the Romans, but was at length himself defeated, and flying into Yorkshire, was delivered captive to his enemies, who sent him to Rome with his wife, children, and various others.

“ As he was led in triumph through the city he viewed the concourse of spectators that were assembled on the occasion, and the splendor that surrounded him, with attention; at length, saying, ‘ Alas! how

is it possible that men possessed of such magnificence at home, could seek to deprive the Britons of their humble cottages?"

"When brought before Claudius he heard with disdain the servile prayers of those who entreated mercy, and being placed before the tribunal, spoke to the following purport: 'If my prosperity had been equal to my former rank and fortune, I had been received in this city rather as a friend than a captive, neither would you have disdained to treat with me on terms of peace; my captivity, to me dishonourable, is to you glorious. I have heretofore possessed power, wealth, horses and arms, and against my will have now lost them; for, if ye be doomed to conquer all men, it necessarily follows that all must submit to servitude. Had I at once yielded, neither would your glory nor my name have been so renowned, and, once conquered, I should have sunk into oblivion; but now, if you give me life, I shall stand an example of your clemency for ever.'

"Claudius, won by the greatness of

mind, with which this warrior bore his misfortunes, ordered him and his companions to be immediately unchained, and gave them liberty."

"Now, papa," interrupted John, "I love Caractacus dearly: the Britons who could deliver up such a man were not worthy of him."

"It is said," answered Mr. Wilmot, "that he was delivered up by Catismanda, queen of the Brigantes, a division of the northern part of the island, containing what is now called Yorkshire, Durham, Lancashire, Westmoreland and Cumberland."

"Like my brother," said Charles, "I am pleased with Caractacus; to bear prosperity, I think, requires but little strength of mind; but to bear captivity, and such sorrows as surrounded him with equanimity, was truly great."

"I differ from you in opinion, Charles," answered Mr. Wilmot. "To bear success properly is yet more difficult than to yield to adversity. To weak understandings, or

contracted dispositions, prosperity is a rock on which they frequently not only wreck their own happiness, but that of others; for the man who enjoys supreme power should be particularly careful in the command and regulation of his own passions—but to proceed. The wrongs of Boadicea, queen of the Iceni, a division containing Suffolk, Norfolk, Cambridge-shire, and Huntingdonshire, next drove the Britons to rebel against the Roman yoke. Prasatagus, king of the Iceni, at his death, hoping to preserve a part of his dominions to his daughters, bequeathed one half to the Romans; but even this step did not secure their possession of their other moiety, for the Romans immediately seized upon the whole. The queen Boadicea attempted to remonstrate, but the Roman procurator ordered her to be scourged as a slave, and treated her daughters in the most dishonourable manner. These insults exasperated the Iceni to take up arms, an example which was speedily followed by the other states; and Boadicea,

a woman of masculine courage, was appointed to head the common forces, which amounted to two hundred and thirty thousand warriors. They attacked several of the Roman settlements and colonies with success, and Paulinus, commander of the Roman forces, found it necessary to hasten to relieve London, where they had established a flourishing colony. His speed was unavailing; he was obliged to leave it to the fury of the Britons, who not only reduced it to ashes, but massacred Romans and other strangers, to the number of seventy thousand.

“Elated with these successes, the Britons sought the Roman forces, who, with their general, Paulinus, were posted in a very advantageous station, with ten thousand men, and between these disproportionate armies a decisive battle took place; Boadicea, with her daughters, in a chariot, leading the British troops. This queen, in her person, was tall and well shaped, her countenance commanding, her voice authoritative, and her hair yellow, and flow-

ing below her waist. She was clothed in a garment of divers colours, and holding in her hand a spear, exhorted her soldiers to do their duty, in words to this effect:— ‘I come not,’ said she, ‘as a woman descended from noble progenitors, to make either kingdoms or riches my quarrel, but even as one of the meanest among you, in revenge for my liberty lost, my body scourged, and my daughters dishonoured. The vice and lust of the Romans is grown to such excess, that they spare neither youth nor age. The gods are therefore with us, and favour just revenge, for they have hitherto led us to conquest.—In this case let us be as dogs and wolves pursuing hares and foxes. For me, though a woman, I will have liberty or death.’

“The battle that followed was obstinate and bloody; but the fierce and undisciplined bravery of the Britons was overcome by the skill of the Romans, and eighty thousand perished in the field—numbers were made prisoners, and the unhappy queen, resolving not to fall into

the hands of the victors, put an end to her life, by poison."

"Poor Boadicea," said Anne, "though I shudder at the thought of bloodshed, yet she was so cruelly and unjustly treated, that it is impossible not to have wished her success."

"I hate the Romans," said Frances, "they had no business in Britain, and I wish they had all been driven back to their own country."

"Their desire of conquest was unbounded," said Mr. Wilmot, "and, like all other species of avarice, was never to be satisfied. The intrusion of the Romans had, however, one advantage, it contributed to dispel the savage barbarism of the country, and may be therefore reckoned among the evils which our Creator sometimes permits, in order to effect those wise purposes, which, at the moment, our contracted sight cannot scan. But to resume my story.

"Julius Agricola governed Britain during the reigns of the emperors Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian, and distinguished

himself for his humanity as well as courage, so that for many years the island enjoyed a peace that it had long been a stranger to.

“ I am now, my dear children, coming to a period that unlimited ambition and abused power must ever experience. Those that grasp at too much usually lose all: and thus it was with the Romans, who, having for ages oppressed their neighbours, and driven them to slavery, were also in their turn doomed to suffer. Their prodigality, magnificence, and luxury wrought their ruin ; for those whom they had oppressed, as if by general consent, resolved to throw off the yoke, and vindicate their natural freedom. The Romans thus surrounded by their foes, gradually recalled their forces from Britain, until at length their calamities at home made them entirely resign their domination, after being masters of the island four hundred years.

“ Previous to their departure, they gave the natives the best instructions respecting their future defence, assisting them also to repair their fortresses, and to build a new

wall of stone, to secure themselves from the intrusion of the Scots and Picts, who frequently harassed them ; for they were not ingenious enough to build, or repair, without instructors.

“ These works completed, the Romans left the island, but the Britons saw their departure with regret, as they feared enemies who might treat them with less lenity than the Romans had lately done.

“ I have now, my dear John, given you a short account of the Britons and the Romans, but I must also inform you of some very material events that had taken place during the period the latter possessed the power in Britain. Our blessed Saviour was born in the thirteenth year of the reign of the Emperor Augustus Cæsar: his doctrine had been spread, and himself crucified. The first Christian church was at Glastonbury in Somersetshire, but the example was speedily followed in various other places. I must now proceed to the Saxon heptarchy in Britain.”

“ Thank you, papa,” said Frances, “ but who were the Picts ?”

“ The Picts, my love, were the original possessors of the northern and eastern divisions of North Britain or Scotland : but at a later period, of the more southern part. Joining with the Scots, they frequently harassed the Britons and Romans, particularly on their northern border, spreading slaughter and devastation wherever they came.”

“ I am glad, papa,” said John, “ that I did not live in those barbarous times.”

“ And with justice you are so. We now enjoy the benefits of arts and sciences rendered perfect by the study of ages. Barbarism is banished, and gross superstition, which at first took its place, was dispelled as learning increased, and the mild light of the Gospel became more widely diffused : remember, therefore, John, what is said in the Scriptures, ‘ where much is given, much will be required : ’ and those errors which the mercy of God might pardon in an unenlightened savage, would in us be the most deadly trespass.” At that moment tea was brought in, and the conversation ceased.

CONVERSATION II.

THE servant had no sooner removed the tea equipage, than the children requested their father to continue.

The Saxon Heptarchy.

“ In the then defenceless and enfeebled state of the Britons, the Picts and Scots uniting, resolved to make the kingdom their own ; and for that purpose attacking the northern wall which the Romans had built to prevent their excursions, they succeeded in forcing a passage, and ravaged the whole country with impunity ; driving the distressed Britons before them, and obliging them to seek for shelter in their woods and mountains. In this harassed and enfeebled condition they had no resource but to crave the assistance of the

Saxons, the most formidable of the German nations, a people bred to war and fearless of danger. Vortigern, who was then king of Britain, sent the invitation, which was immediately accepted, and fifteen hundred Saxons, under the command of Hengist and Horsa, who were brothers, landed in the isle of Thanet. These being joined by the British forces marched against the Picts and Scots, who had advanced as far as Lincolnshire, where, giving them battle, they gained a complete victory.

“ After this success, the Saxons soon became sensible of the fertility of the land to which they had been invited, and contrasting it with the barrenness of their own, ardently longed to possess it: to effect which, they sent for great numbers of their countrymen, and receiving a supply of five thousand soldiers, they formed a permanent settlement in the country.

“ In the meantime, Vortigern, won by the beauty of Rowena, daughter of Hengist, to obtain her father's permission to marry her, was weak enough to settle upon

him the fertile province of Kent. But it appears this alliance did not cement the friendship of the two nations, for the chronicles of that period relate that Vortigern and his nobles being invited soon after by Hengist to a grand banquet, the latter taking the advantage of their being overcome with wine, caused three hundred of them to be slain, and the king himself to be made captive."

"Alas, poor Britons!" said Anne. "Well might they lament their former masters; for during the latter part of their subjection to the Romans, they enjoyed peace."

"True," replied Charles, "but I cannot but think they might have improved more in the art of war under such able commanders as the Romans, who had been four hundred years among them."

"After the death of Hengist, a body of Saxons, under the command of Ella and his three sons, founded the kingdom of the South Saxons, though not without great bloodshed; this included Surry, Sussex,

and the New Forest, extending to the borders of Kent.

“ Another power, under the command of Cerdic and his son Kenric, landed in the west, and, supported by their countrymen, defeated the Britons who opposed them, and established the third Saxon kingdom in the island, naming it the West Saxons, and comprising the counties of Hampshire, Dorsetshire, Wiltshire, Berkshire, and the Isle of Wight.

“ It was in bravely opposing this Saxon intruder that Arthur, a prince renowned in story, acquired his fame ; for though his valour was not successful in driving out the intruders, it was great, and could courage have repaired the disasters of the Britons, his might have been effectual. He is said to have conquered the Saxons in twelve successive battles, in one of which it is asserted he slew no less than four hundred and forty with his own hand, but the Saxons were too numerous to be expelled by the efforts of one valiant commander, and the reward of his courage, instead of complete conquest, concluded only in making a

peace. The enemy still gained ground, and this prince, in the decline of life, had the mortification to be spectator of their further encroachments, for, distracted with family feuds, he had sufficient employment to quell the rebellion which they caused, and was himself at last slain in a battle with his nephew Mordred, who fell with him.

“ The success of the Saxons in Britain made their countrymen still continue to emigrate. One body, under the command of Uffa, seized upon the counties of Cambridge, Suffolk, and Norfolk, and gave their commander the title of King of the East Angles. This was the fourth Saxon kingdom founded in Britain.

“ Another party took possession of Essex, Middlesex, and part of Hertfordshire, which formed the fifth Saxon principality, and was called East Saxony.

“ The kingdom of Mercia was next established by these invaders, and comprehended all the middle counties from

the banks of the Severn to the frontiers of the two last named kingdoms.

“The seventh and last kingdom which they obtained was that of Northumberland, the most powerful and extensive of the whole. It was formed from the union of two smaller kingdoms, the one called Bernicia, containing Northumberland and the bishopric of Durham, the other the Deiri, extending over Lancashire and Yorkshire.

“The Britons, overpowered or held in the most servile subjection, the Saxons began to contend among themselves: all ambitious for the sole dominion, strove for mastership, until the kingdoms of the Heptarchy were at length united into one great state, under the dominion of Egbert King of Wessex, who was solemnly crowned King of England, by which name henceforward the country was known.

“About four hundred years after the first arrival of the Saxons in Britain, St. Gregory the then Pope sent missionaries

among the Saxons to convert them to Christianity. It is said, that before his appointment to the papal chair he chanced one day to pass through the slave market at Rome, where seeing some children of great beauty exposed for sale, he enquired from whence they came: being informed they were English pagans, he replied to this purport in the Latin language, 'were they Christians they would be angels.' From this time he is said to have formed the resolution of converting the unenlightened nation, and to that purpose sent a monk named Augustine, with some of his brethren, on the mission.

"These monks landed in the isle of Thanet, where they met with a favourable reception. Ethelbert the Kentish king was baptized, and Augustine preaching with zeal, speedily made several converts, so that the Gospel spread, and Christianity began to triumph over paganism."

"Papa," said John, "I thought that Christianity began to spread even in the

time the Romans had possession of the island, how then came it so little known many years after ?”

“The Saxons,” replied Mr. Wilmot, “were pagans, and their numbers overspreading the whole kingdom, their tenets must naturally prevail. The Britons also were but just emerging from barbarism on the settlement of the Saxons, and most probably readily relapsed into an error, so recently renounced.

“Among other idols they worshipped Jupiter, whom they called Thor, supposing him to rule the air, the thunder, lightning and rain, and to cause the corn to prosper, and whatever concerned the fruits of the earth ; to him they dedicated Thursday.

“Woden was the second in estimation, and from him was named Wednesday. To him they sacrificed living men ; he was reputed the god of war, and to give them conquest over their enemies. A third was Frea or Frico, and esteemed the god of peace and pleasure ; to him

they dedicated Friday—but it grows late, and I must cease for this evening: however, if you are not weary of the subject, I will continue to-morrow, and give you some account of the invasion of the Danes. History, the further we proceed, becomes the more attractive, and I am very much mistaken, if in our next conversation you are not charmed with the character of Alfred.”

The younger children soon after wished their parents a good night and retired.

CONVERSATION III.

THE studies of the day over, the children took their places round their parents, when John entreated Mr. Wilmot to continue.

The Invasion of the Danes.

“THE Danes were the people who possessed the countries bordering on the Baltic or North Sea; at first they landed in small parties on the coast of Britain, and committed trifling devastations; but emboldened by success, seven years after their first attempt they made a descent upon the coast of Northumberland, and pillaged a monastery; but their fleet being shattered by a storm, they were defeated by the inhabitants, and put to the sword.

“Though frequently repulsed, they usually obtained their end, which was plunder, and spoiling the country. They if possible, avoided a general engagement, and

seized not only upon what property fell in their way, but also upon the inhabitants, whom they carried away as slaves to their own country.

“ Strengthened by numbers, they at length resolved to attempt a permanent settlement; and landing in the isle of Thanet, took up their abode.

“ In this place they kept their ground, notwithstanding King Ethelwolf, son of Egbert, gained a victory over them, in which numbers were slain.

“ This prince was succeeded by Ethelbald, who reigned but a short time, though sufficiently long to make his name odious by his vices.

“ His brother Ethelred succeeded; he was a brave commander, and was assisted in his battles by his younger brother, Alfred, afterwards surnamed the Great. This prince, though he had been deprived by the king of a large patrimony, sacrificed all private resentment to the public good, and his brother being slain in an encounter with the Danes near Nottingham, he suc-

ceded him at a time the kingdom was reduced to the brink of ruin. The Danes had subdued Northumberland and East Anglia, and had penetrated into the heart of Wessex; the Mercians were also united against Alfred, and his dependence upon the other states was very precarious. Through fear of the continual excursions of the Danes, the land lay barren and uncultivated, the churches and monasteries were pillaged and burned, and nothing appeared but objects of dismay and devastation.

“ In this state was the kingdom on the accession of Alfred, who appears not only to have been born to save his ruined country, but to set an example, in those barbarous times, of humanity, and of what exertions an active mind, supported by virtue, is capable.

“ This prince had been the darling of his father, and perhaps from that cause it was that his education had been too much left to his own inclinations, for at the age of twelve he was entirely ignorant of all literature. At that period, hearing some

Saxon poems read, which recounted the praise of heroes, his mind was at once roused to exert all its energy, to imitate the great actions he had heard; to which purpose he eagerly persisted in studying, to peruse their achievements. In these laudable pursuits he was encouraged by his mother, and soon obtained the reward of his application, for he not only acquired what information his own country afforded, but also gained a thorough knowledge of the Latin authors, who directed his taste, and formed his mind to glory.

“ He had reigned scarcely a month when he was obliged to oppose the Danes, who had seized Wilton, and were exercising their usual ravages. He marched against them in haste, with the few soldiers he could suddenly assemble; the battle was obstinate and bloody, and the Danes gained the field.”

“ Poor Alfred,” interrupted John, “ it must have been very dispiriting for him to lose the first battle.”

“ It doubtless was vexatious,” replied

Mr. Wilmot, " but it was not in the power of misfortune to damp the heroic spirit of this prince; he redoubled his diligence, collected his scattered forces; and was shortly prepared for another engagement, so that the Danes, dreading his activity and courage, proposed a peace, promising to quit the kingdom. The terms were accepted by Alfred; but the Danes, regardless of their word, only removed to other parts, burning and destroying wherever they came. Harassed by their ravages, and the country overrun by fresh reinforcements, Alfred had the mortification to see his subjects flying from their native land to escape these usurpers; some withdrawing to the continent, others to Wales, while many submitted to the conquerors, and became slaves. In vain he endeavoured to remind them of the duty they owed their king, their country, and themselves; the panic was too great for words or persuasions to prevail, and he was at length himself forced to submit to the necessity of the times."

“ Dear father,” said John, “ I hope he did not yield to the Danes.”

“ No; though surrounded with dangers and difficulties, he remembered that a good king is the father of his people, and therefore resolved to remain among them until some more happy moment, when he could bring relief. For this purpose, he dismissed his attendants, put on the disguise of a peasant, and took up his abode at the dwelling of a cow-herd in Somersetshire.

“ While in this humble state the cow-herd’s wife, being unacquainted with his quality, intrusted him with the care of some cakes, which were baking on the fire, but Alfred, perplexed with other thoughts, and being busily employed in repairing his bow and arrows, neglected his trust, and suffered the cakes to burn, for which he received a severe reprimand; the dame, throwing his weapons aside, saying, “ Fellow, why dost thou not turn the bread, which thou seest burn? thou art ready enough to eat it, ere it be half baked.”

“ Papa,” said Frances, “ if ever she found out it was the king, she must be greatly ashamed at the liberty she had taken.”

“ Doubtless she was, my dear girl; but such a character as Alfred would only be amused with her humour, for it is only little minds that are angered at trifles. In a cow-herd’s wife, neither manners nor education was to be expected; yet she might possess great rectitude of heart, which is, in the estimation of all good men, superior to either.”

“ True,” replied Mrs. Wilmot, “ yet grossness of manners ought to be carefully guarded against, for the most handsome person, or the most learned, without the necessary knowledge of what is due to the customs of society, appears disgusting; but, when united, they render the possessor doubly estimable, and his, or her, company eagerly sought after.”

“ Alfred, previous to his retirement,” continued Mr. Wilmot, “ had concerted measures for collecting a few friends,

should occasion offer; which men, faithful to his cause, concealed themselves in the forests of Somerset, where they were afterwards joined by others of their party, until they found themselves at length in sufficient force to join the king.

“ During this interval Ubba, the commander of the Danish force, spread desolation over the land; he ravaged the country of Wales, and found none powerful enough to oppose him till he reached the castle of Kenwith on his return, where the Earl of Devonshire had retired with a small force. This brave nobleman, finding it impossible to support a siege, and resolved not to surrender to such perfidious foes, determined to make the desperate effort of rushing through his numerous besiegers sword in hand; his followers warmly entered into his measures, which on the first onset the Danes viewed with contempt, but right and valour triumphed, the ravagers were not only dispersed with great slaughter, but also their general Ubba was slain.

“ This victory restored courage to the

before dispirited Saxons ; an advantage that Alfred did not neglect ; he apprised them of the place of his retreat, and when they joined him, conjured them to be firm to their duty, and to be ready at a minute's notice with their whole force.

“ Though he had succeeded thus far, no one was found sufficiently courageous to venture near enough to reconnoitre the position and number of the enemy ; Alfred therefore undertook the task himself, and in the simple dress of a minstrel, with a harp in his hand, entered the Danish camp, where he exerted all his skill to please. His music was so much admired that he was brought into the presence of Gythrum, the Danish prince, and remained with him some days, until he gained information of all he wished to learn.

“ Having made the necessary observations, he summoned his adherents to join him in the forest of Selwood, a command which they readily obeyed.

“ All being prepared, they attacked the Danes in their most unguarded quarter,

who, astonished to find an army of English, whom they thought entirely subdued, speedily gave way, and, notwithstanding the superiority of their numbers, were routed with great slaughter, and the survivors shortly after obliged to surrender. Men truly brave are ever merciful; those among the Danes who did not choose to embrace Christianity, Alfred permitted to embark for Flanders, under one of their own generals named Hastings.

“ It was now that Alfred was to reap the reward of his patience and valour; he obtained a greater extent of territory than any of his predecessors had enjoyed. The kings of Wales paid him homage for their possessions, and the Northumbrians submitted to a king of his appointment; peace and prosperity were spread over the land, and the devastations of war were repaired by industry and cultivation. In the multiplicity of these cares Alfred did not forget one measure which he conceived might make the prosperity of his country permanent, and which was to polish the

barbarous manners of his people, who when he came to the throne were sunk in the grossest ignorance, the natural result of the continual disorder of the government, and the ravages of the Danes. Alfred drew up a body of laws, and invited to his court the most celebrated scholars from all parts of Europe; he founded, or at least re-established the University of Oxford, and endowed it with many privileges, and by his own example led his people to industry and study. He understood grammar, rhetoric, architecture, and geometry. He was an excellent musician and an accurate historian, and acknowledged the best Saxon poet of the age. He divided his time into three equal portions, one of which was given to sleep, diet, and exercise, another to the business of his kingdom, and the third to study and devotion. In the qualities of his mind he was pious, moderate, and merciful, yet just and enterprising, and though strict and inflexible in command, yet mild and unassuming in conversation; to complete all, nature had

bestowed upon him a person replete with dignity and strength, and an engaging and open countenance.

“ This noble prince died after a reign of twenty-four years, and six months, and was buried at Winchester in a monastery of his own foundation.

“ Such, my dear children, is the history of Alfred, what think you of him ?”

“ Sir,” replied Charles, “ I could almost be tempted to say, in the words of the queen, when she addressed Belshazzar, in the book of Daniel, ‘ O king ! live for ever ;’ for what a loss must so enlightened a man have been to his country in those barbarous times.”

“ He truly must,” exclaimed Mr. Wilmot, “ but such a king *must* live for ever ; his fame and virtues have been handed down for ages, and will to the latest posterity, as long as history or books shall last, and as for his immortal part, he but changed a temporal for an eternal crown, for we cannot doubt but that his patience, fortitude, and piety, met their reward.”

CONVERSATION IV.

ON the ensuing evening the children requested their father to continue, which he did as follows :

“ On the death of Alfred, his son named Edward ascended the throne, and, after a reign of twenty-four years, was succeeded by Athelstan, his natural son, the illegitimacy of his birth not being then deemed a sufficient obstacle to bar his inheritance. He was a prince worthy of remembrance for his valour and wisdom ; he brought the country into a regular monarchy, for he utterly expelled the Danes, and caused them to pay a regular tribute. He conquered the Scots, and gave them a king named Constantine. He caused mints for the coinage of money, to be fixed in several cities, and in every large town appointed a coiner.

“ In this prince's reign lived the famous Guy Earl of Warwick, who in combat, it is said, slew Colbrand the Danish

champion, at a place called Hide, near Winchester."

"I have read of Guy of Warwick, papa," interrupted Frances.

"The greater part of what you read of that warrior you must esteem as fables, my good girl," replied Mr. Wilmot, "for at such a distance of time history, in many instances, is vague and imperfect. Many writers allow he possessed uncommon strength and bravery; but for the wonderful acts attributed to him in ballads and old legends, they are merely the offspring of the author's brain—but to proceed—Athelstan reigned fifteen years, and was buried at Malmsbury in Wiltshire. Athelstan was succeeded by his brother Edmund, a prince said to have been disposed to justice, and possessed of many virtues, but his reign lasted only five years, being slain at a banquet by a villain named Leof, who intruded himself at the entertainment. This king was buried at Glastonbury.

"Edred succeeded to his brother Edmund; his reign was likewise short, being but of nine years continuance.

“ Edwy, his nephew, at his uncle’s death, ascended the throne ; in the character of this king historians differ, but during the whole of his reign, which lasted but five years, he was involved in disputes with the monks, more particularly with Dunstan, archbishop of Canterbury, who at length succeeded so far as to get him deposed.

“ The malcontents then placed his younger brother Edgar on the throne, and Edwy, unable to stem the torrent, was obliged to consent to a partition of the kingdom, but his death which happened soon after, left Edgar in peaceable possession of the whole.

“ This king, being placed on the throne by the influence of the monks, paid them peculiar attention. During his reign he repaired and new founded several monasteries. The King of Wales brought him in yearly by way of tribute 300 wolves, which then greatly infested the country. For three years the tribute was paid, but on the fourth none were to be found.

“ The vice of drunkenness was at that time at such a height that the king commanded most of the drinking houses to be put down, allowing only one in a village, and a proportionate number in large towns. He also commanded certain cups to be used, marked with nails, and made a law, that whoever drank beyond the mark should pay a fine.

“ This king died after a reign of sixteen years, and was succeeded by his son Edward, called the Martyr, who reigned but three years ; for, being hunting in a forest near Corfe Castle, where his mother-in-law Elfrida resided, and having outstripped his company, stopped at her gate, being thirsty, and requested some drink. While holding the cup to his lips, one of the treacherous Elfrida's domestics, instructed for that purpose, stabbed him in the back, when the unhappy youth, finding himself wounded, spurred his horse, but soon fainting from loss of blood, fell from the saddle, and his foot hanging in the stirrup, he was dragged along until he died.”

“What a cruel wicked woman,” interrupted Frances. “I hope, papa, she was punished.”

“In those days people of rank committed great enormities without punishment, and Elfrida being mother to Ethelred, who was the next successor, and for whose sake the murder was committed, secured her from the merited penalty of her guilt, but her mind, we may judge, was by no means at ease, for she did severe penance; and, as if she could bribe heaven to forget her crime, built two monasteries for nuns, in one of which she herself retired and passed the remainder of her days.”

“Solitude and mortification were indeed befitting her,” said Mrs. Wilmot, “but neither the quiet of a cloister, nor the bustle of the world could stifle the remembrance of the innocent blood she had caused to be spilt, and which must continually cry against her, and empoison every hour of her life.”

“’Tis not for us to judge,” resumed Mr. Wilmot, “of the punishment here-

after to be inflicted on the perpetrators of such crimes; even in this world it is bitter, as was the case in the present instance, for, added to the sting of conscience, which doubtless pursued Elfrida, the people, disgusted at the means by which Ethelred obtained the crown, distracted the land with dissensions, and civil broils, until the Danes, taking advantage of the disunion, seized an opportunity so favourable to their interest, and again landed on the coast, spreading ruin and desolation wherever they came.

“As they now resided indiscriminately among the English, a plan was formed by the latter for their general massacre; and Ethelred, at once a weak and cruel prince, readily embraced the proposal. This plot was carried on with great privacy, and executed in one day, all the Danes being slain without mercy.

“The English had scarcely time to congratulate each other on their deliverance from their common enemy, before Sweyn, king of Denmark, who had been

informed of the slaughter of his countrymen, appeared on the western coast with a large fleet, and furious with revenge, on his landing spread fire and sword wherever he came; until at length, after various defeats, Ethelred was obliged to fly into Normandy, leaving the country to his victorious rival.

“Canute, afterwards surnamed the Great, succeeded Sweyn as king of Denmark, and also as general of the Danish force in England. On the death of Sweyn, Ethelred returned with his son Edward, and by the aid of a part of his subjects, assisted by the Normans, resumed his former power.

“This change was of short continuance, for Canute having recruited his force, prepared to oppose him; when Ethelred worn with sickness and sorrow, died and left the throne to his son Edmund, called Ironsides, either for his great strength of body, or because he generally wore armour.

“The contest between this prince and Canute was carried on with great obsti-

nacy and perseverance, and after several battles it was at length thought expedient by both parties to divide the kingdom between them by treaty, which was accomplished accordingly; Canute took the northern part, and Edmund the southern; but the kingdom was not long divided, for a month after the arrangement, Edmund was murdered at Oxford; and Canute left in possession of the whole.

“The valour of Canute in his youth, and his piety in age, have been the subject of many historians. Flattered by his courtiers, who declared his power to be uncontrollable, he scorned their adulation, and in one instance took the following method of reproving them: he desired his chair to be placed on the sea-shore when the tide was coming in, and in a commanding voice ordered the sea to retire—‘the land upon which I sit is mine,’ said he—‘I charge thee approach no nearer, nor dare to wet the feet of thy sovereign,’—then feigning to sit some time in expectation of submission, until the waves began

to surround him; he said unto his courtiers, 'the power of God is alone uncontrollable, and he only is lord and master, whom earth and sea obey.' This prince reigned twenty years, and was succeeded by his son Harold, who ruled three years.

"To Harold succeeded Hardicanute his brother, King of Denmark, who was received by the English with the utmost demonstrations of joy; but their satisfaction was of short duration, for Hardicanute was unjust, violent, and brutal, and so given to excess in eating and drinking, that even in that unenlightened age he was the scorn of his subjects, who in derision called him *Swine's Mouth*, and celebrated the anniversary of his death with sports and games. This prince died in consequence of his intemperance at a feast in Lambeth, after a reign of two years."

"What a shocking death," said Mrs. Wilmot, "to be suffocated by excess of eating and drinking, and how depraved must his disposition be, not to endeavour to curb so horrid a propensity."

"I think," observed Mr. Wilmot, "that his subjects justly named him, for his disposition more resembled that of a swine, than of a man gifted with a rational soul. At what a moment too was he called to his great account; at a moment when he had prostituted the blessings granted by his Maker, and disgraced his likeness by the manners of a brute—but to continue. The disgust occasioned by the conduct of the Danish king once more induced the English to choose a monarch of the Saxon line, and Edward, surnamed the Confessor, the son of Ethelred, was by general consent placed on the throne.

"This prince, from his sanctity, was called St. Edward; he reigned twenty-five years, and at his death, leaving no children, was succeeded by Harold, the son of a popular nobleman, whose name was Godwin.

"Though Harold mounted the throne with universal approbation, and was possessed of valour and conduct, yet these advantages were insufficient to secure him

from the misfortunes attendant on an ill-grounded title, for his pretensions were opposed by William Duke of Normandy, who claimed the crown, affirming, that it was bequeathed to him by King Edward, to whom, though illegitimately, he was also related in the third or fourth degree of consanguinity.

William, afterwards called the Conqueror, was the natural son of Robert Duke of Normandy, and though, by the side of his father, he was nobly born, he owed more real greatness to nature than to birth. His person was vigorous and his understanding capacious, and he possessed a courage not to be repressed by danger.

“ Though young when he inherited the dukedom of Normandy, he quelled his rebellious subjects, repelled all foreign invaders, and having established tranquillity at home, resolved to extend his views to England; which he was the more encouraged to attempt from some overtures which he received from King Edward, who in the latter years of his reign was

wavering in the choice of a successor. The pope favoured his pretensions, and choosing the summer for the attempt, he embarked with a chosen army of sixty thousand men, equipped in the most warlike manner, and landed at Pevensey on the coast of Sussex.

“ Harold was just returned from defeating the Norwegians, who had invaded the kingdom. His army was composed of active and valiant troops, who were strongly attached to their leader, and eager to engage his enemies. On the other hand the army of William had voluntarily united under his command, were skilful in battle, and inured to danger. So that never before had England beheld two such armies drawn up together to dispute the crown. The day before the battle William sent an offer to Harold to decide the difference between them by single combat, in order to spare the effusion of blood; but Harold refused, saying he would leave his cause to the God of armies to determine. Both

armies encamped that night in sight of each other, the English passing their time in singing and feasting, and the Normans in devotion and prayer.

“ At the hour of seven in the morning both armies drew up in order of battle. Harold in the centre of his forces, that his men might see he was exposed to equal danger with themselves. William fought on horseback, leading on his army singing the song of Rowland, a famous warrior of their country. The Normans began the fight with their cross bows, which the English had not then in use, and which, as their ranks were close, did great execution; but on coming to a nearer encounter, the English with their bills, a sort of hatchet, with which they fought, hewed down their enemies with great slaughter; confusion ensued, the Normans were upon the brink of destruction, but the example of their leader re-animated their courage: for in the front of danger was William, who had no less than three horses slain under him. Find-

ing it, however, impossible to break the English line, he had recourse to stratagem, and pretended to give ground, which, as he expected, drew his opponents from their ranks, an advantage which he instantly seized; for, on a signal, the Normans returned to the charge with redoubled fury, broke the English troops and drove them to a rising ground. In this extremity Harold was seen flying from rank to rank, rallying his troops, and by his example inspiring them with courage, and though he had toiled all day until near night-fall, his activity and vigour appeared unabated, still seeking and maintaining the post of danger and honour, at the head of his Kentish men. Victory again fluctuated, the Normans fell in great numbers, but the perseverance and courage of their leader constantly kept them to the charge, until fortune at length determined a conquest which valour was unable to decide. Harold, making a furious onset at the head of his troops against the Norman infantry, was

shot through the brain with an arrow ; his two valiant brothers who fought by his side died with him.

" Thus fell, sword in hand, the courageous Harold, amidst heaps of slain, in-somuch that after the battle, the royal corpse could scarcely be distinguished among the dead.

" Here ended the Saxon monarchy in England, which had continued for the space of six hundred years."

" Where papa," said John, " was this battle fought ?"

" Near Hastings, in Sussex, upon the 14th day of October, 1066. Harold had only reigned nine months."

" Poor Harold, I am sorry he was killed," observed John.

" We are naturally interested for brave men," answered Mr. Wilmot. " That eventful day made many widows and orphans, as it is said that not less than six thousand and thirteen of the Normans were slain, and of the English a far greater number."

“Indeed,” said Anne, “I feel for the poor soldiers as much as for Harold; they fought for no kingdom; and by their death their families perhaps were left to beggary and ruin.”

“The observation, my dear child, is just,” answered her father, “for every immortal soul is of equal value in the sight of God. War is one of the sad consequences of the depravity of our nature. Did we indeed obey the precepts of our divine leader, we should dwell in friendship with all mankind, every man would be our brother, and we should try to conciliate him by reason rather than have recourse to the sword.”

“Yet, Sir,” replied Charles, “war is sometimes unavoidable, for to submit to a foe who would trample on the rights of mankind, would, I think, be as derogatory as injurious.”

“It would; for true dignity, with virtue for its basis, is ever just, mild, and, as far as it is compatible with safety, forbearing; while self-erected conse-

quence, though it may for a time dazzle with a false lustre, will in the end, like an air-blown bubble, burst and sink into its original obscurity. In these humanized times, if we now and then see a tyrant let loose upon his fellows, we ever find his reign short, distracted with fears at home, and with perils abroad.—But enough for to-night; if you are not weary to-morrow I will try what amusement the reign of William the Conqueror will afford you.”

“I should like to know how he behaved after he had gained the kingdom,” said John.

“I will endeavour to satisfy you—good evening.”

CONVERSATION V.

“DEAR father,” said Anne, “John and Frances have been impatient to hear the continuation of your history.”

“I will then,” replied he, “begin immediately, as we are all assembled.*

William the Conqueror.

“**WILLIAM** Duke of Normandy was in his person tall and muscular, and so strong that few men could bend his bow: after his victory he resolved to subdue the castle of Dover and the whole of Kent; but Stigand, the archbishop of Canterbury, and Egilsin, the abbot of St! Augustine’s, resolved if possible to render the yoke which they could not avoid as light as possible, and therefore, assembling the people of Kent in the city of Canterbury, they declared to them the danger

that threatened them, the misery of their neighbours, and the pride and insolence of the Normans, who would reduce them to bondage; exhorting them rather to die like men for the laws of their country, than to submit to such disgraceful servitude.

“The people, by common consent, accepted the proposal, and the archbishop Stigand, with the abbot Egilsin, were declared leaders of the party: All being prepared, on a day appointed, they met at Swanscomb, two miles west of Gravesend, where hiding themselves in a wood, they waited the approach of Duke William. On the second day, finding their enemy draw near, they approached his army, concealing their number with boughs carried in their hands for that purpose, which they presently threw down, causing their trumpets to sound, and their banners to be displayed, at the same time their bows were bent, their swords drawn, and their spears prepared, to shew they were ready for battle; while in this posture,

Stigand and Egilsin advancing, addressed the duke to this purport :

“ My Lord, the people of Kent are come forth to meet, and to acknowledge you for their liege sovereign, requiring only in return that they may enjoy, and follow, as heretofore, the ancient liberty, laws, and customs, of their country, which if you refuse behold them ready to give you battle, resolved to die here altogether, rather than submit to bondage.

“ The duke in this case acted prudently, if not willingly, and therefore granted the request of the Kentish men ; and pledges being given on both sides, they yielded up to him the earldom of Kent and the castle of Dover.

“ In order to render his government as secure as possible, he caused himself to be crowned at Westminster, in the year 1066, and received the homage and oaths of fidelity of the nobles and principals of the kingdom : that there should be no secret meetings at night, he commanded that in every town and village through-

out England a bell should be rung at eight in the evening, on hearing the sound of which every person should extinguish their fire and candle, and retire to rest.

“ Having reduced the English to submission, he returned to Normandy; but his absence was productive of the most unhappy consequences, for his adherents seized the opportunity to enrich themselves by their extortions; and in return the English resolved to seize the occasion to regain their freedom. They had fixed upon Ash-Wednesday to massacre their invaders, when during the time of divine service they would be disarmed as penitents; but William's return disconcerted their schemes, and from that period he placed no confidence in his British subjects, whom he regarded as irreconcilable enemies and treated accordingly, indulging his avarice and that of his followers by numberless confiscations, and humbling all whom he conceived had power or inclination to resist him. Thus

all the ancient nobles of the kingdom were reduced to distress and beggary, while the Normans revelled in their wealth, and possessed every place of trust and honour."

"Now indeed, papa," said John, "I quite dislike King William: all were not concerned in intending to kill the Normans; and it was quite a robbery to seize their property."

"In new and partial governments there will ever be strong contentions; 'tis only in settled and well-regulated states that property can be secure; where a man's title rests upon conquest or usurpation, he must naturally let his adherents have some share in what he gains, to secure their fidelity.

"But to continue: Among other oppressions of King William, either from a love of hunting, or in order to levy sums of money, he inflicted severe penalties against those who hunted his deer. Camden observes, it might be to give his Normans more free access into England from the sea-coast, for he caused a tract

of land in Hampshire, now called New Forest, to be depopulated for thirty miles, driving the poor inhabitants out to beggary, and destroying six-and-thirty villages and churches to make room for wild beasts."

"Oh! what a wicked action, papa," interrupted Frances.

"It was indeed," replied Mr. Wilmot. "You, my dear Frances, wanted a story of wild beasts, and I think this action reduced the Conqueror to their level, for it was at once barbarous, unjust, and disgraceful to humanity; and if we may hazard a judgment that punishments on earth follow such deeds, this tyranny was marked with the anger of Heaven, as you will hear when I proceed in my narrative.

"William was now at the height of his power, and so strongly fixed in his government, that he had nothing to fear from his enemies, and therefore looked forward to continue his reign with prosperity and peace. This hope was however fallacious, for Heaven decreed it otherwise, and the

Conqueror who had power to subdue armies, vanquish kingdoms, and bend them to his will, was to feel that though he considered himself beyond the reach of man, he was yet mortal, and doomed to experience sorrow in its most grievous form, for surely such it was, when it sprung from his own children, who embittered the whole of his latter years, and by conquering whom he could gain neither glory nor happiness.

“ My dear children, before I proceed I must request you to observe minutely what follows, as it will prove that the most serious consequences are sometimes to be apprehended from trifling causes, and that when brotherly love does not subsist in families, the most deadly effects are to be apprehended. Guard your hearts against envy and suspicion, for those vices once fixed, they lead to every crime that can disgrace human nature.

“ King William had three sons and several daughters. The sons were Robert, William, and Henry: Robert, the

eldest, called Curthose, from the shortness of his legs, inherited the bravery of his father, but not his prudence, and was frequently heard to express his jealousy of his brother, who, with great assiduity, had wrought upon the affections of his father. A disposition empoisoned with envy will ever find cause for offence and resentment; and one day the princes being in sport together, the two younger threw some water on their elder brother, as he passed a court beneath them. Robert's mind, inflamed with anger against them, construed this silly jest into a contrived insult, and, drawing his sword, he ran to take revenge. The castle in a moment was filled with tumult, and with difficulty the king at length appeased the disorder; but a fixed animosity from that moment took place, for on the same evening Robert, supported by several of his friends, withdrew to Rouen, in order to surprise the castle, but their intention was defeated by the governor.

“ The flame thus kindled, the popular character of the prince soon caused

all the young nobility of Normandy, Maine, Anjou, and Britany, to espouse his cause. This unnatural contest continued several years, and William was at length obliged to raise an army of Englishmen to subdue his son; with these he forced him to quit the field, and was reinstated in his Norman dominions.

“ In this battle, both enclosed and concealed by their armour, William and his son encountered each other, in which onset King William was wounded in the arm, and thrown from his horse; but speaking, was recognised by his son, who immediately alighted, and raising his father, assisted him to remount. In this battle many were slain on both sides.

“ Some time after a general insurrection took place at Maine, the nobility of which had ever been averse to the Norman government, their disaffection being encouraged and supported by the King of France, who sought to lessen King William's power by fomenting

dissensions between him and his nobles.

“In order to quiet this tumult he again went to the continent, and entering the Isle of France, burned and laid waste whatever barred his passage. These hostilities were, however, suddenly stopped by an accident, which ended the monarch’s life. Burning the city of Meaux, his horse treading on some hot ashes, plunged so violently, that his rider was thrown forward, and so severely bruised in the bowels, that he shortly after died at a little village near Rouen, after a reign of twenty years and eleven months. His body was brought, with great solemnity, to Caen in Normandy, to be buried in a church he had founded; but the funeral was boldly forbidden by a knight, who affirmed that the ground was his, and that King William ought not to be laid in a spot which he had obtained by rapine and violence: this reproach was however appeased by Prince Henry pay-

ing an hundred pounds of silver, and his father's body was deposited according to his request.

"Robert, by his father's will, succeeded him in Normandy, and William, surnamed Rufus, in England. To Henry he gave the inheritance of his wife Matilda, who was daughter to the Earl of Flanders. He also commanded all prisoners to be released, and his treasure to be distributed to different churches. I have already told you King William had several daughters; he had also another son named Richard, who died young, and, as Camden says, from a blast of pestilential air (we will suppose a cold) in the new forest of Hampshire, which he had depopulated."

As Mr. Wilmot ceased, Charles said, "I would not, Sir, interrupt the narrative, which I see has greatly interested my brother John, but how dreadful must the feelings of Robert have been, when he found the opponent he had dismounted was his father. The very idea makes me

shudder with horror. Another moment, perhaps, had rendered him a parricide."

"Nothing more probable," replied Mr. Wilmot, "but minds capable of such unnatural contentions cannot be supposed to possess those affections, which constitute the happiness of a tender father and of a dutiful son. William was doubtless guilty of many acts of tyranny and oppression, but he was punished in his most vulnerable part, in his children; for he, doubtless, felt the unkindness of his son very severely; and I know nothing more dreadful to a parent than to see his children in a state of continual animosity and warfare; but give me your opinion, John."

"Dear papa, I think I could sooner die than injure my brother; and if I had raised a sword against you, I should be even ashamed of seeing my shadow in the light of the sun."

"My good boy, I believe you, but we must allow for education, and the manners

of the age. Have you any general observation to make?"

"Only that I admire the knight who so boldly stepped forward and claimed the land at the burial of the Conqueror; I was rejoiced he gained the worth of his property."

"It was merely justice," replied Mr. Wilmot. "The knight doubtless did not dare claim it in the life-time of the Conqueror, and it was an act becoming the piety of a son to palliate the remembrance of the deed, by paying the price."

"Well, Frances, what say you?" inquired Mrs. Wilmot, addressing her daughter.

"I was thinking, mamma," replied she, "of the King's son, Richard, losing his life in the New Forest, where his father had driven out so many poor people."

"It was," answered Mr. Wilmot, "an awful rebuke, and if I do not mistake, he was not the only one of the family who met with death there; but of this

you will be informed as you proceed in the history. To-night we must conclude, as I am particularly engaged. Think of what you have heard, and as no subject is so barren as not to afford some matter for improvement, profit by the good, and avoid the evil."

CONVERSATION VI.

“MY dear papa,” said John, “if you are not engaged this afternoon, will you oblige us by continuing your relation.”

“Willingly, my dear boy; I rejoice to see you interested with history. Where young people are not so, but relinquish that improving study for frivolous reading, I have remarked, that as they increase in years, their disposition is usually as trifling as their studies.”

William Rufus.

“WILLIAM, surnamed Rufus, from the colour of his hair, began his reign the 9th of September, 1087. Historians say, he was inconstant, covetous, and cruel. He burthened his people with taxes, despoiled the rich, and oppressed the poor, spending what he thus unjustly

gained, in luxurious living and sumptuous apparel.

“ The Norman barons, who had never, since the Conqueror’s death, been satisfied with the division of the empire, regarded Robert as the rightful heir of the whole, and accordingly formed a conspiracy against William, which Odo the late king’s brother promised to bring to maturity.

“ William, sensible of the danger which threatened him, became more assiduous to gain the affections of the English : and by promises and concessions in their favour, speedily collected a numerous army ; while Robert, prodigal in idle expences, squandered both his money and time until the opportunity was lost, for King William, seizing on his disaffected nobles, confiscated their estates, and banished them from his kingdom.

“ After this a new breach took place between the brothers, and King William made some great encroachments on his brother’s dukedom.

“ At this period one of the most material events which we meet with in history took place, I mean the crusade or holy war, which was first projected by a man called Peter the hermit, a native of Amiens in Picardy. He made a pilgrimage to the holy sepulchre at Jerusalem, and saw, with indignation, the inhuman conduct of the infidels, who were in possession of that place, to the Christians. On his return, by the permission of the Pope, he went throughout Europe, preaching and calling upon all men to unite in expelling the infidels from the holy land ; and such was the enthusiasm of the time, that men of all ranks obeyed the summons, distinguishing themselves by wearing a white habit with a red cross on the right shoulder. Amongst the great men who embarked in this enterprise was Robert Duke of Normandy. The crusade was entirely suited to his disposition, for he was naturally brave and ambitious of glory : it also suited his situation, for he was poor, and harassed with insurrec-

tions ; and what perhaps more than all induced him to embrace it, he was naturally fond of change. To procure money for this expensive undertaking he mortgaged the dukedom of Normandy for ten thousand marks (6,666l. 13s. 4d.) to his brother William Rufus, who lost no opportunity to enrich himself. +

“ Though by this acquisition, William’s territories were greatly increased, it added little to his peace or happiness, for he was constantly perplexed with conspiracies and insurrections of his new subjects, who detested him, and were ever more ready to dispute than to obey his commands.

“ Greedy of gain, he next agreed to advance money to the Earl of Poitiers and Guienne, who had also collected an immense multitude for the expedition. It was lent on the mortgage of his dominions, and King William had prepared a fleet and army to take possession of the rich provinces entrusted to his care, when an accident put an end to all his ambi-

tious projects ; for, hunting in the New Forest of Hampshire, he was shot by an arrow aimed at a deer by Sir Walter Tyrrel, which, glancing against a tree, struck the king, who fell instantly dead. You doubtless remember this was the second of William the Conqueror's sons that fell in this spot. We are also informed by Camden, that his grandson Henry, by Robert his eldest son, while he was pursuing the chase in the same forest, was caught among the boughs by the head, and strangled before any one came to his assistance."

"How dreadful," said Frances ; "indeed it looked as if God was angry, and made those that hunted in that forest unfortunate."

"God, my dear child, is just ; all good springs from him, and the misfortunes that attend us in this mortal life, are either the effect of our own depravity, or trials to fit us for a better state. For William Rufus, the land groaned with his extortion and prodigality, until the

wisdom of heaven thought fit to cut him off by the hand of Sir Walter Tyrrel. The other two were young, and of them historians say little; they might in mercy be snatched away before they were defiled with such gross sins as disgraced the rest of their family, and for the place, to them immaterial, only decreed as an awful-memento to the survivors."

"Pray, papa," said John, "what became of Sir Walter?"

"He fled to France, and it is said joined the crusade that was setting out for Jerusalem. An old historian tells, that so little respect was paid to the body of the deceased king, that it was thrown into a common cart and taken to the city of Winchester, where it was interred the following day; and that for his death no one shed a tear, unless it was for joy, at being delivered from the rule of so unjust and avaricious a man.

"This king reigned twelve years and eleven months."

As Mr. Wilmot paused, John said,

“ Dear Sir, you have told us very little to-day.” “ I feared to weary you,” replied he, “ but if that is not the case will continue.”

Henry the First.

“ HENRY the First, surnamed Beauclerc from his learning and knowledge, was the late king’s younger brother ; and seizing upon his treasure, found but little difficulty in gaining the kingdom : he was crowned at Westminster on the first day of August 1100.

“ This prince was tall of stature, well formed, and of an open and engaging countenance. Historians add that he was witty, eloquent, and fortunate in his undertakings ; but, to counterbalance these qualities, he was given to covetousness, cruelty, and libertinism. His first step to gain the good will of the people, was to discharge from the court all the ministers of his brother’s arbitrary power : he re-

formed the abuse of measures, and was the first who instituted the use of the ell, by the length of his own arm ; this measure was then called *vino*, and is the same we now call a yard.

“ He restored to his subjects the use of lights in the night, which had been forbidden by his father, after the bell had rung the hour of eight.

“ To increase his popularity, and to confirm his claim without danger of a rival, he resolved to wed Matilda, the niece of Edgar Atheling, who had retired to a convent, and taken the veil. The English remembered their monarchs of the Saxon line with regret, and this lady, one of the nearest of blood to the ancient heirs of the crown, he considered as a proper consort, and accordingly procuring the consent of the church, the nuptials were celebrated with great solemnity and grandeur.

“ Soon after this event, Robert Duke of Normandy returned from Jerusalem, and after taking possession of his Norman

dominions, with a powerful army laid claim to the crown of England ; but a peace was at length agreed upon, on condition that Henry should pay the sum of three thousand marks yearly ; and if either died without issue, his brother should inherit his dominions. This arrangement made Robert remain two months in England with his brother, after which he returned to Normandy. The indiscretions of Robert left him an easy prey to his enemies ; averse to business, he suffered the greatest impositions, and is said to have been so pillaged by his domestics, that he had not even necessary cloaths to wear ; while his subjects, left to the mercy of his creatures, were robbed and defrauded without redress. In this exigence the Normans applied to Henry, who eager to embrace whatever might feed his ambition, readily promised them redress ; and the year ensuing landed in Normandy with a powerful army, where after subduing some of the principal towns, in a battle that ensued, he

took his brother prisoner with ten thousand of his men, and all the barons, who in spite of his misfortunes had remained attached to him.

“ This victory was followed by the total reduction of Normandy, and Henry returned in triumph to England, leading in his train the captive duke, who though possessed of bravery, generosity, and honour, was reduced to this extremity for want of activity and prudence, which rendered his domains an easy prey to the designing and ambitious Henry.”

“ What a hateful character was that of Henry,” said Charles, “ and the wickedness of his conduct appears increased by ingratitude ; for historians say, previous to this event, Robert had remitted the yearly payment of the three thousand marks.”

“ The noble prisoner,” resumed Mr. Wilmot, “ was conveyed to Cardiff Castle in Glamorganshire, where he remained closely confined the remainder of his life, which lasted twenty-eight years ; during

which he suffered every indignity. I would now, my dear children, willingly draw a veil over one action of Henry's, of so horrid a nature that humanity shudders at the recollection. It is said that Robert endeavouring to make his escape, was taken, and by the order of his brother deprived of sight, to prevent such an attempt in future."

"What a cruel monster," exclaimed Frances. "You might well say, papa, that such wicked kings were like wild beasts."

"He was worse a thousand times," said John indignantly; "to deprive his brother of his possession, to make him a prisoner, and to put out his eyes; surely he could never be happy or prosperous afterwards."

"As for happiness, John," replied Mr. Wilmot, "of that we cannot judge; but according to the custom of the time, he stifled the reproaches of his conscience by founding an abbey at Reading, which was then considered as a sufficient expi-

ation for every species of barbarity and injustice. For worldly prosperity, my dear children, it is not always the reward of virtue, or adversity the punishment of vice ; for we frequently, in this life, witness the misfortunes of the good, and the success of the wicked. Wealth and power are of no estimation in the sight of God ; but a heart free from guile and oppression will assuredly hereafter meet their reward. Punishments in this world, the Scripture tells us are salutary ; for as parents correct their children to break them of evil propensities, so does the wisdom of God punish those he loves best, to make them nearer perfection, and more worthy of the happiness he designs them."

Mr. Wilmot paused, and then continued.

" Fortune now appeared to smile upon Henry ; he was at the height of power, in peaceable possession of two powerful states, and father of a son his acknowledged heir, and who at eighteen was all

his most sanguine wishes could desire. His daughter Matilda was married to Henry the Fifth, Emperor of Germany, and he doubtless looked forward to increased honours to grace his old age.—How fallacious is the wisdom of man! and how feeble is the foundation of worldly happiness! in a moment the breath of God destroys it, and the vacant heart is left to seek a fresh object. On the contrary, in the gloom of a dungeon, surrounded with every mortal evil, the soul that leans on God alone, finds a support that never fails or decays; but looking forward to a better and more permanent state, forgets the present transitory ill, in the expectation of a joyful hereafter.”

“I trust, my dear Sir,” said Anne, “that poor Robert met with that support in the castle of Cardiff.”

“I hope he did, he had time for reflection, and might repent of his former indiscretions—but to proceed—Henry, suspicious from his own former conduct,

and fearing, perhaps, that his son might be supplanted, as he had before supplanted his brother, resolved to have him acknowledged, both in England and Normandy; which ceremony was performed with great pomp in both states.

“ In order to render the voyage to Normandy more pompous and agreeable, most of the young nobles of the kingdom were of the party, and the prince having received the homage of the barons, all were returning in triumph. The king and prince were in separate vessels of the fleet; the first had sailed from Harfleur, and was soon out of sight of land. The ship which contained the young prince and his companions was detained by some accident; and the crew, with their captain, named Fitz-stephens, having spent the interval in mirth and drinking, became so disordered that, unable to steer the vessel, she struck upon a rock, and was instantly dashed to pieces. The prince was put into a boat, and might have escaped, had not the cries of

Maud, the king's illegitimate daughter, awakened his humanity. By persuasion he prevailed on the sailors to row back and attempt to save her; but the boat—no sooner approached the wreck, than numbers who clung to the vessel, inspired with the hope of life, leaped in, and overwhelmed it, so that the whole went to the bottom.

“By this accident an hundred and sixty of the youthful nobility were lost, a butcher of Rouen being the only person that escaped. The shrieks of these unfortunate sufferers reached the shore, and were heard even in the king's ship, though the cause was unknown. For three days the king entertained hopes that his son had reached some distant part of England, but when assured of the dreadful certainty, he fainted away, and was never seen to smile afterwards.

“Some modern historians have said he died soon after this event, but on examining more ancient records, he appears to have survived it fifteen years;

the immediate cause of his death proceeding from a surfeit occasioned by eating lampreys, a kind of eels. He died at St. Dennis, a little town in Normandy ; his bowels were buried at Rouen, but his body was brought to England and deposited in the abbey of Reading, which he had founded.—Henry the First reigned thirty-five years, three months and twenty-nine days ; his brother Robert died the year before him.”

As Mr. Wilmot ceased, Anne said—“ Were it not for Henry’s cruelty to his brother, I could sincerely pity him for the death of his son—as it was, I think he was properly punished.”

“ He was indeed punished where he felt it most severely,” replied Mrs. Wilmot—“ for all his honours were at once blighted, and the cruelty and craftiness of so many years rendered fruitless by being deprived of his male heir.—I think he bequeathed his possessions to his daughter Matilda, who married the emperor.”

"He did," answered Mr. Wilmot—"and as I ever wish, if possible, to view worldly errors as favourably as possible, we will hope that the awful lesson he received in the loss of his child had its proper effect, and rendered him more befitting the great change he had to experience.—But our conversation has been sufficiently long; it depends on yourselves whether we shall continue it to morrow."

"Dear, papa," said John, "I hope you will then oblige us by renewing it; I know Charles and Anne love history, and I shall remember far better when I come to read it—and Frances, I am sure, likes it."

"I do indeed, papa," replied Frances, "and though I am little, I will endeavour to read history as soon as possible."

"You will do well, for I know no trait more pleasant in the education of a young person, than to find them well acquainted with history.—For the present, good night."

CONVERSATION VII.

THE children entreating Mr. Wilmot to continue, he proceeded in the history.

Stephen.

“King Henry was no sooner dead, than the son of his sister, who had married the Earl of Blois, laid a claim to the crown; and hastening from Normandy to England, was made king 1135, by one of those sudden revolutions that the barbarity of the times could only account for.

“In order to render himself popular, he passed several acts to gratify both the church and state; restored to the people the laws of Edward the Confessor; and, to fix himself still more securely, having seized the royal treasure, purchased a ratification of his title from the pope with a

part of the money. Matilda, however, soon asserted her claim, and, supported by Robert Earl of Gloucester, a natural son of the late king, she landed on the coast of Sussex; her whole retinue on the occasion consisting only of an hundred and forty knights, who immediately took possession of Arundel Castle, where the nature of her claim soon increased the number of her adherents.

“In the meantime, Stephen, assured of her arrival, hastened to besiege Arundel Castle, which was too feeble to make a long defence, and must have speedily yielded; but it being represented to the king that it was a castle belonging to the queen dowager, and of course a breach of respect to attempt taking it by force, he relinquished his purpose, and suffered Matilda to come forth in safety, and had her conveyed in security to Bristol, another fortress equally strong as that she had quitted. After this several skirmishes took place on either side, until at length, a victory gained by Matilda, cast

Stephen from the throne, and exalted her in his place.

“ Matilda was crowned queen at Winchester with all imaginable solemnity; but, unfit for government, and forgetful of the assistance she had received from the nobles, she treated them with a haughtiness that soon raised her many enemies, and made them resolve to take some active step in favour of the deposed monarch.

“ The Bishop of Winchester favoured these discontents, and all being ripe for revolt, it was resolved to seize the person of the queen; but, informed of the conspiracy, she fled from London, where she then resided, and sought refuge at Winchester. Here she continued for some time, until the town being pressed with famine, she was again obliged to escape; but the Earl of Gloucester, endeavouring to follow her, was taken prisoner, and soon after exchanged for Stephen, who was taken from a dungeon and replaced on the throne, a revolution once more taking place.

“ Stephen had, however, in his latter years, to contend with a new and formidable rival, which was Henry, the son of Matilda, who at the early age of eighteen gave the promise of valour and of a strong understanding.

“ With the majority of the people in his favour, young Henry resolved to claim his hereditary right, and invading England was joined by the most powerful barons of the kingdom.

“ Stephen, alarmed at the popularity of his rival, was necessitated to have recourse to treaty, when it was agreed that Stephen should reign during his life, and Henry succeed at his death, and William (Stephen's son) inherit his patrimonial estate. This arrangement satisfied the whole kingdom, and Henry having evacuated England, Stephen was left in quiet enjoyment of his throne; he however survived this treaty but a year, dying at Canterbury after a reign of eighteen years, ten months, and twenty-four days.

“ In the life of Stephen,” added Mr. Wilmot, “ the vicissitudes of greatness are strongly exemplified, but are what every usurper must naturally expect.

“ The fate of Matilda also affords a proper lesson for pride; for with the partiality of the nobles, and the public voice in her favour, she lost the crown from her arrogance and ill-timed haughtiness; I know no vice that makes more enemies than pride; with our superiors it renders us despised and laughed at, with our equals it causes our company to be shunned, and with our inferiors it makes us hated, or if they serve us it is merely through fear—but to continue.

Henry the Second.

“ HENRY the Second was the son of Matilda the empress, by her second husband Geoffry Plantagenet. On his accession, he was crowned at Westminster 1154, and, conscious of his power, immediately resolved to correct the abuses

which had crept into the state by the weakness of his predecessor. He dismissed the mercenary soldiers, who bred disorders in the nation, and resumed many benefactions given to monasteries in former reigns. He confirmed by charter the rights of the citizens, rendering them independent of any superior but himself, which charters were the ground-work of English liberty, for they struck at the root of the feudal government, curbed the power of the rich, and protected the poor. By such conduct Henry soon became the most powerful prince of his time, the indisputable monarch of England, master of a third of France; and having humbled those barons that would have circumscribed his power, all appeared to promise peace and happiness, when he was annoyed from a quarter whence he least expected.

“ Thomas à Becket, son of a citizen of London, was the first Englishman, since the Norman conquest, who had risen to any height of power. He had

received his education both in London and Paris, and from the humble station of being clerk in the sheriff's office, rose by gradation, until at length he was made Archbishop of Canterbury, a dignity second only to royalty.

“This height attained, he endeavoured, by an appearance of sanctity, to retrieve his character from some levities he had before been guilty of. He wore sackcloth next his skin, and changed it so seldom that it was filled with dirt and vermin. His usual diet was bread and water, rendered unpalatable by bitter herbs, and so frequent was the discipline he used that his back was mangled with stripes. He every day on his knees washed the feet of thirteen beggars, and, under the shew of sanctity, declared himself protector of the privileges of the clergy, which it was Henry's aim to abridge.

“This disposition had speedily an opportunity of shewing itself; for a priest having seduced the daughter of a gentleman in Worcestershire, murdered her fa-

ther, to conceal the crime; but the deed becoming known, its abandoned atrocity roused the indignation of the people, and the king insisted on the culprit's being given up to the civil power, which Becket strenuously refused."

"The abominable hypocrite!" exclaimed Charles; "I never read his name without a sentiment of anger. Heaven can never be gratified by voluntary filth and dirt, and for his bread and bitter herbs, I dare say he made himself good amends in private."

Mr. Wilmot smiled at his son's warmth—"Charles," said he, "you judge uncharitably; might he not be an enthusiast? Think you the stripes, and washing the poor people's feet were not mortifications?"

"Doubtless they were," replied Charles, "and borne merely to increase his fame for sanctity—but I beg pardon, Sir, for interruption."

"By no means, your remarks give me pleasure.—The king, vexed at the con-

duct of Becket, convened a council of the nobility and principal prelates of the kingdom, at which meeting a number of regulations were made. Among others it was enacted, that priests accused of any crime should be tried by the civil courts, and that laymen should not be tried in the spiritual courts, unless by legal witnesses. These regulations, with others, to the number of sixteen, were unanimously agreed to, Becket himself, though with some reluctance, signing his name to the arrangement.

“ Thus far the law passed ; but when it reached Alexander, the then pope, he condemned it in the strongest terms, and declared his total rejection of it, as he saw how far it must curh the power of the priests. This involved the king and Becket in a fresh contest, the latter of whom, arrayed in his episcopal robes, with his cross in his hand, went to the palace, and entering the presence chamber sat down, with his cross extended before him, declared the will of the pope

and his adherence to it. He next demanded permission to leave the kingdom, which being denied, he withdrew in disguise, and crossed over to the continent, where joining the pope, they, by their denunciations, endeavoured to shake the very foundation of the king's authority. Becket wickedly compared himself to Christ, who had been condemned by a lay tribunal, and who, he said, was crucified anew in the present oppression of the church. Nor did he rest in complaint only, for he excommunicated all the king's chief ministers, and all who obeyed or favoured the new regulations.

“Frequent attempts were made towards an accommodation, but without effect, until the interest of both parties rendered such a step absolutely necessary, but even then nothing could exceed the insolence of Becket, who, on his return to England, instead of returning to his diocese, made a progress through Kent in all the splendour of a sovereign pontiff, followed by people of all ranks, who, deceived by his

appearance of sanctity, celebrated his return with hymns of triumph. Thus encouraged he began to launch forth his vengeance against those who had before opposed him. The Archbishop of York, who, at the request of the king, had crowned Henry his eldest son, in Becket's absence, he denounced and suspended; the bishops of London and Salisbury he excommunicated, and likewise one man, for having spoken against him, and another for having cut off the tail of one of his horses.

“ During these transactions, the king was in Normandy, but on his return heard the complaints against Becket with the utmost indignation, reprobating the hour that he had raised that insolent churchman to be the plague of his life.

“ The Archbishop of York, who was present, remarked, that while Becket lived he could never expect to enjoy tranquillity or comfort; to which the king, under the influence of passion, replied, that he had no friends about him, or he should

not have been so long exposed to the insults of that ungrateful hypocrite.

“ These words attracted the attention of the whole court; and as there are ever too many ready to earn favour of great men, at any price, four of the king’s most resolute attendants resolved to gratify their sovereign’s secret inclination, and accordingly, procuring assistants, they proceeded to Canterbury, where repairing to Becket’s house, they loudly and fiercely reproached him for the insolence of his conduct. During the altercation the bell rung for vespers (or evening prayers) when Becket immediately left them, and went, unguarded, to the church, where the conspirators followed, resolved to complete their undertaking.

“ Whether Becket thought they would not dare to assail him in the cathedral, or that he aspired at the glory of martyrdom, is uncertain, but if the first, he was mistaken, for he had no sooner reached the altar than they all fell upon him, and with repeated blows laid him dead before the

altar of St. Benedict, which was sprinkled with his brains and blood.

“ The news of the murder, and the holy place where it was perpetrated, filled the king with consternation, as he well knew it would be imputed to him, and in order to divert the minds of the people to a fresh object, he undertook an expedition to Ireland, which was already nearly subdued by forces sent for that purpose, and principally commanded by Strongbow, Earl of Pembroke. From this contest, in which neither much blood was shed, nor much money expended, Ireland became an appendage of the British crown, and as such hath ever since continued.

“ Though surrounded with power and conquest, and delivered from his hated enemy Becket, yet Henry was not without the most poignant afflictions. He had married his Queen, Eleanor, from motives of ambition, but afterwards fixed his affections on Rosamond Clifford, whom you have perhaps heard of by the name of

Fair Rosamond. Illicit connexions are ever followed by remorse, fear, distrust, and revenge; for though the king concealed his mistress, as we are told, in a labyrinth at Woodstock park; yet the jealousy of the queen discovered her retreat, when, holding a dagger to her breast, she forced her to swallow poison. Mutual confidence destroyed between the king and queen, the latter sought to sow dissensions between her husband and children.—Henry, the king's eldest son, was taught to consider himself injured, as he had been crowned, not to be admitted into a share of the government of the kingdom; and Geoffry and Richard she persuaded to assert their right to the territories which had been assigned them, resolving herself to escape to the court of France, where she might continue her intrigues against her husband with impunity. Her intended flight was however discovered, and by the king's command she was put into confinement.

“How distressing must it have been to

Henry to see his children eager to seize his possessions, even in his life-time, and leaguings with his most bitter foes, for a powerful confederacy was entered into on the continent in their favour.

“ In this dilemma Henry, who well knew the influence which superstition held in the minds of the people, resolved to do penance at the shrine of St. Thomas of Canterbury, for that appellation had been given to Becket, and accordingly put his design into execution—as soon as he came within sight of the church he alighted from his horse, and walked bare-foot until he reached the shrine, before which he prostrated himself; the following day he received absolution, and returned to London.

“ This step was so conciliatory to the people, that the barons, who had revolted, immediately made submission, and in a short time all within the kingdom was reduced to quiet and obedience.

“ Prince Henry, the king’s eldest son, by this general pacification, was disap-

pointed in his intention of seconding the discontented nobles, and soon after died at Martel, in his last hours expressing the utmost compunction for his undutiful conduct towards his father.

“ Richard, the second son, now became heir apparent, and soon shewed the same unwarrantable ambition that had misled his brother; for he entered into a league with the King of France, and waged an unnatural war against his father. A treaty was, however, at length concluded, in which Henry was obliged to submit to many mortifying concessions; but what wounded him most deeply was, that on demanding a list of the barons it was stipulated he should pardon, he found among the number the name of his son John, the most beloved of all his children. He had long borne an infirm state of health with resignation: he had struggled to appear calm under the rebellious conduct of his other sons, but when he found the child he had so highly prized, and considered the staff of his age, leagued against him,

he could no longer contain his indignation, but giving way to despair, cursed the day on which he had received his miserable being; bestowing at the same time a malediction on his ungrateful sons, which he could never be prevailed on to retract. From this time he lost his vivacity, his heart became a void, no object appeared to give him comfort; the barbarous return he had met with from his son John incessantly preyed upon him, and a lingering fever, occasioned by a broken heart, speedily terminated his miseries and life together. He died at the castle of Chinon, in the fifty-eighth year of his age, and the thirty-fifth of his reign.

“ Such, my children, was the life of Henry the Second, who, possessed of power to command, and gifted with a superior understanding, was yet unhappy; for the life of man in this state of probation can never be free from care. In the character of Becket we have an example of what perseverance may effect, and which, from the common rank, exalted him to the highest dignities of the church.”

“ He would indeed have been praiseworthy,” replied Mrs. Wilmot, “ had he borne his advancement with the meekness befitting his sacred vocation; and though I cannot decidedly adopt Charles’s opinion, yet I must allow his humility appears but as a thin veil to cover his pride. In drawing the impious contrast between himself and our blessed Redeemer, he forgot that no affected austerities, nor gaudy pomp signalized the Saviour of mankind, but great in real humility, herecommended by his own example love and peace to all men. Meekness and forgiveness of injuries Becket also appeared unacquainted with; for it was no sooner in his power than he sought revenge on all who had offended him.”

“ Your mother, Charles,” said Mr. Wilmot, “ takes your side of the argument against Becket, I must therefore give him up. But should not the example of Henry, when he spoke in hasty anger against the prelate, be a lesson for us to restrain our words and sentiments before

those whose interest it may be to assist us in worldly views, even to the more material cost of everlasting happiness ; in which case surely the most heavy part of the sin will rest on our own heads ?” —

“ Poor Henry,” replied Anne, “ he might utter the words against Becket without any criminal intention, and was, in effect, no happier for his death. The conduct of the queen, and the unnatural behaviour of his children, inspires me with pity and sorrow for him.”

“ True, sister,” answered John. “ Yet I am glad that Prince Henry, his eldest son, expressed compunction for his conduct before his death ; it was then all the expiation he could make.”

“ Justly observed,” said Mr. Wilmot. “ At the hour of death, at least, if we have time for thought, we see things as they really are ; the gloss which worldly objects throw over them is dispersed, and the feeling which must naturally ensue, that we are on the point of appearing before an impartial Judge, whom we can

neither bias or deceive, leads us to wish to make all the reparation in our power."

"On the whole," said Anne, "nothing appears to me so dreadful as the king cursing his children; surely it must leave an impression on their minds never to be effaced."

"It did not appear so," said Mr. Wilmot. "I however think Henry's conduct in that respect rash and unbecoming a Christian. To see his children rebelling against him, and greedily waiting for the moment when death should close his eyes, was indeed hard; but he would have acted more worthily to have prayed for their repentance, rather than to have cursed them. But we must cease for this afternoon; to-morrow we will renew our history."

CONVERSATION VIII.

“DEAR papa,” said John, the next day, “will you be good enough to continue this afternoon?”

Mr. Wilmot, ready to oblige his children in every laudable gratification, and pleased to have fixed their attention on the history of their country, immediately began.

Richard the First—surnamed Cœur de Lion.

“RICHARD, second son of Henry, obtained the appellation of Cœur de Lion from his valour, and succeeded his father in the year 1189. In his person he was tall and of a cheerful countenance, in his disposition valiant and active, a warm friend, and a dreaded enemy.

“Before his accession he was inflamed

with the rage of the times, of engaging in the holy war! nor did his obtaining the crown damp his ardour, for raising a sufficient sum by selling his superiority over the kingdom of Ireland, which had been obtained by his father, he joined the King of France in the expedition; their united armies amounting to an hundred thousand fighting men.

“ Though these princes had entered into the most solemn engagements of mutual support and friendship, yet jealousy and mistrust actuated both until they reached Palestine; where, after a time, they appeared to forget their animosities, and to act in concert. Philip king of France was at length obliged to return home from the infirm state of his health, leaving Richard ten thousand of his troops to assist in the general cause. Victory after victory crowned the Christian adventurers, who at length resolved to prepare their way to Jerusalem, by besieging Ascalon. Saladin, the most heroic of all the Saracen kings, opposed their passage

with an army of three hundred thousand men, but Richard, whose valour was invincible, was not to be discouraged; for, when the wings of his army were defeated, he led on the main body of his forces, restored the battle, and gained a victory, leaving forty thousand of the Saracens dead on the field. Ascalon soon after surrendered, as did several other cities of inferior note, and Richard saw within his grasp the object of all his wishes and expectation, the city of Jerusalem. How futile is the gratification that depends alone on earthly objects, and how uncertain the paths of ambition. Richard had attained his height, and could proceed no further; for on a survey of his troops, he found them so exhausted by disease, fatigue, and famine, that the prosecution of the enterprise was impossible, the utmost he could effect being to enter into an accommodation with Saladin, and a truce was agreed on for three years; during which the sea-ports were to remain in the hands of the Christians, and all pil-

grims were to be secured from oppression or insult.

“ The expedition thus concluded, Richard resolved to return to England, but being obliged by bad weather to take the road through Germany, though in the habit of a pilgrim, he was arrested by Leopold, Duke of Austria, who delivered him to Henry the emperor.

“ To the disgrace of honour and humanity, he was loaded with shackles like a criminal, and confined in a dungeon, regardless of his rank, or the valour that had yet more distinguished him.

“ It was a considerable time before his subjects in England knew his fate, so little intercourse was there at that time between the nations. The discovery, it is said, was made by a poor French minstrel, who playing upon his harp, near the prison where Richard was confined, an air which he knew the unhappy king was fond of, was answered from within by the royal prisoner, who repeated it upon his own harp, and thus discovered the place of his confinement.

“The secret thus revealed, terms of accommodation were proposed, and a ransom agreed upon, which amounted to an hundred and fifty thousand marks, or one hundred thousand pounds sterling of our present coinage, and Richard was once more restored to his subjects, who received him with the utmost joy, after an imprisonment of a year and three months.

“I must now, my children, shew you how far the avarice of power, and despicable ambition may lead us—John, who had leagued against his father, Henry the Second, taking advantage of his brother Richard’s captivity, which he endeavoured to prolong, conspired with the King of France to make himself master of England, setting forth a report of his brother’s death, though even in that case he had no lawful claim, as Arthur, the son of his elder brother Geoffry was living.”

“John was a hateful character,” said Anne. “A disobedient son to a good father, and an unnatural brother; I can-

not think of him with any degree of patience."

"I am sorry to say, my dear girl," replied Mr. Wilmot, "that I never yet witnessed an unnatural or undutiful child who shewed, even to others, those affections which we mutually owe to society. The heart which cannot be attached by the many years of tenderness and attention, which good parents must testify for their children, cannot be expected to form virtuous predilections of any kind. Wealth and power were to the heart of John of more estimation than either father or brother, and to have gained them, he would doubtless have sacrificed both."

"O the wicked man!" said Frances, "I hope, papa, he never got his brother's kingdom."

"He was indeed wicked; but my dear Frances, do you not think his crime in some measure carried his punishment with it? His heart was void of affection, he loved no one, and in return no one could love him. When his father or brother

tended to have hanged me—I am now in your power, and my torments may glut your revenge, but I will endure them with pleasure, in the reflection that I have delivered the world of a tyrant.’

“ Richard made no reply, but commanded the archer to be presented with a sum of money, and set at liberty ; but the general of the forces, regardless of so noble an example of Christian forgiveness, ordered him to be immediately flayed alive, and then hanged ; which sentence was executed.

“ King Richard died in the year 1199, in the tenth year of his reign, and the forty-second of his age, leaving no legitimate children. By his own request, he was buried at his father’s feet, whom he confessed he had greatly injured.”

“ Though Bertram did kill the King,” said John, “ the general had no right to put him to death.”

“ Certainly not, Richard shewed true greatness and Christian charity in the order he gave respecting him ; but brave

men are usually generous, while dastardly spirits, on the contrary, are mean, cruel, and revengeful."

"In this reign," said Charles, "was elected the first mayor of London; his name was Fitzalwyne; he held the office during twenty-four years."

"I thank you," replied Mr. Wilmot, "you will oblige me by recalling to my memory any circumstance I may have forgotten."

"In this reign too, if I do not mistake," said Anne, "lived the famous outlaw, Robin Hood, who has given rise to so many ballads."

"Dear Anne," replied John, "I have read some of them; he robbed only the rich, and gave to the poor, and suffered no woman or child to be oppressed."

"Such indeed are the accounts we read of him," answered Mr. Wilmot; "but supposing them true, can they make us forget he was a robber? The gloss of generosity and valour may, on the first glance palliate such deeds, yet a moment

of calm reflection shews them in their real disgraceful colours. Had his valour been exerted for his country, and his generosity confined to the limits of his own purse, he might have been truly estimable ; while as it was, he fixed a disgrace upon his name never to be effaced."

"Papa, as it is yet early, I intreat you to continue," said John.

"I am glad I do not weary you, and will proceed—but what say you, Frances, are you fatigued?"

"No, papa, I should like to know how John behaved ; for I fear, as he was an undutiful son, and a bad brother, he could not make a good king."

CONVERSATION IX.

King John.

“**J**OHN succeeded his brother Richard in 1199,” continued Mr. Wilmot. “He was in Normandy at the time of his death, but returned immediately to England to seize the crown, though the right of inheritance indubitably appertained to Prince Arthur, son of Geoffry, King Henry’s elder son.

“King Philip of France espousing the part of Arthur, a war ensued, during which the young prince, only sixteen years of age, was taken prisoner, and conveyed from Falaise to the tower of Rouen, where he was soon after put to death, as it is said, by the hands of his cruel uncle; an action which served to make him detestable to all good men, and even despised by bad ones.

“A dispute arising between the suffra-

gan bishops and the Augustine monks, respecting the election of an archbishop, John took the part of the bishops, and selecting two knights fit for his purpose, he directed them to expel the monks from their convent, and to take possession of their revenues ; but the pope, who was then acknowledged as supreme head of the church, refused to confirm the election of either of the contending parties, himself nominating Stephen Langton as archbishop of Canterbury. John, however, refusing his assent to the pope's choice, the latter put the kingdom under an interdict."

" Pray, papa," said Frances, " what is an interdict ?"

" A prohibition or curse was an instrument commonly made use of by the see of Rome, to inspire terror in the minds of the people, who, in those days were grossly weak and superstitious ; by this prohibition a stop was put to divine service, and to all religious rites, the sacrament of baptism excepted ; the churches

were shut up, the statues of the saints laid upon the ground, the dead were refused Christian burial, and thrown into ditches and pits, without any of the usual rites, or funeral solemnity.

“ In this dilemma, nothing could be more distressing than the situation of John, driven almost to distraction by the affront offered him by the pope, who even went so far, from the power he assumed as head of the church, to give the kingdom of England to the sovereign of France, who actually prepared an army to invade it: irresolute how to act, jealous of his subjects, whom he knew hated him, and fearing an enemy in every face; he, however, made an effort to receive the invaders, and at the head of sixty thousand men advanced to Dover.

“ The pope was a profound politician, and had no intention to destroy the power of England; his motive was only to intimidate John to compliance, he therefore caused him to be informed, by his legate, that there was yet one way to secure him-

self from danger, namely to throw himself on the mercy of the holy father, who would, like a tender parent, on his humble submission, take a repentant son to his favour.

“ John was too much alarmed not to embrace the offer ; he received the legate’s remonstrances with abject obedience, and took an oath to perform whatever stipulation the pope should impose ; as a previous step to which he formally confirmed Langton in the primacy, as appointed by the see of Rome.

“ The pope’s conditions, to be performed on the part of John, were the most extraordinary of any ever recorded in the annals of history ; no less than that he should, in the presence of his barons, and in the face of his people, kneel, and surrender to pope Innocent and the church of Rome his crown and kingdom, which were to be then restored, and held in vassalage from the pope, to whom he was to pay an annual tribute of a thousand marks.”

“ Dear papa,” interrupted John, “ the king could surely never stoop to such a humiliation? I would have fought at the head of my men till I had died, rather than have consented.”

“ You would have done well, in a just cause, and with an applauding conscience,” replied Mr. Wilmot; “ but remember that cruel men are seldom truly brave; and the heart of John, weighed down with ingratitude to his nearest connexions, and the murder of his brother’s son, doubtless recoiled at the reflection of appearing in the presence of a just God—but to proceed—John submitted to all that was required, and, taking the oath of allegiance, had his crown restored by the legate, who trampled under his feet the first tribute he had consented to pay. Thus was John reinstated in his dignity, and the interdiction, which had lasted six years, taken off; but you may readily suppose that this contemptible submission did not contribute to gain him the affection of the people; on the contrary, as

before he was hated, he was now despised; and continued to oppress the people in the most grievous manner; the barons at length, disgusted with his weakness and tyranny, assembled with a large body of men at Stamford, and from thence marched to Brackley, about fifteen miles from Oxford, where the court then was kept. John, alarmed at their approach, sent the archbishop of Canterbury, and others of his council, to learn their demands. The barons, in answer, delivered a list of what they required; the principal article of which was, the restoration of the former charters of Henry and Edward, and to have them truly and irrevocably confirmed.

“ The king, at first, in the utmost passion, swore never to comply, asking, why they did not at once demand his kingdom; but the confederates were too strong to care for his rage, or fear his resentment; they chose a general, whom they dignified with the title of Mareschal of *The army of God and the Holy Church*; and, without

further delay, made war against him. They besieged Northampton, took Bedford, and proceeded to London, where they were joyfully received.

“ John, in the utmost alarm, offered to refer all differences to the pope alone, or to eight barons, four to be chosen on either part; but this arrangement they rejected with disdain, and he was at length obliged to promise a compliance to their demands; and a conference was appointed for that purpose.

“ The meeting took effect in a place between Staines and Windsor, called Runimede, a place still held in reverence as the spot where the standard of freedom was first erected in England.

“ The barons with a great number of knights and warriors, arrived there first, the king and his retinue a day or two after. The barons were firm to their demands, and the king at length agreed to them, with a facility which gave some suspicion of his honour; the charter was however signed, and is that which is now

known by the name of *Magna Charta*, and which is the bulwark of English liberty.

“ Though fear had made John submit to the concession the barons required, he speedily shewed that he never meant to be governed by them, and once more the country was ravaged with civil wars. The barons, in this contest, had recourse to the king of France, who sent forces to their aid, under the command of his son Lewis, to whom they promised the crown; but the better genius of England prevailed, snatched it at once from a tyrant, and saved it from a foreign ruler, by an event that, though no one could foresee, all rejoiced at.

“ John had assembled a considerable army, and burned and destroyed the possessions of many of his nobles, but on the arrival of Lewis fled before him, until at length, passing from Lynn, along the sea-shore, he lost all his carriages, baggage, and treasure, by the influx of the tide, and himself escaped, with the greatest

difficulty, from drowning. Arrived at the abbey of Swinstead, he fell sick of a fever, which soon shewed fatal symptoms, and the ensuing day was carried forward in a litter to Sleaford, from thence removed to the castle of Newark, where, after having made his will, he died, in the fifty-first year of his age, and the eighteenth of his unhappy reign."

"I think," said Anne, "I have read that there was a suspicion that his death was occasioned by poison."

"Some historians have supposed it, and accuse a white monk of the abbey of Swinstead of committing the act; but of this there is no authentic proof; certain it is, that his death, if by the immediate visitation of God, was a most desirable event to the people, for his life was one continued scene of deceit, weakness, rapine, and violence; and the retrospect, at the close, could afford nothing but horror and despair."

"Pray, papa," said John, "what be-

came of Lewis, the king of France's son, after John's death?"

“ He made a hard struggle to obtain the crown, but his attempts failed, and he was at length obliged to sue for peace, which being granted, he retired to France—but enough for to-night, to-morrow I will proceed to the history of Henry the Third.”

CONVERSATION X.

Henry the Third.

HENRY the Third was but nine years old when he succeeded, in the year 1216; his character was entirely opposite to that of his father, being gentle, humane, and merciful, easy and good-humoured to those about him, harbouring neither distrust nor suspicion; these latter qualities, however, caused him often to be imposed on by his dependents, while a want of energetic vigour rendered him unfit to command at home, or to appear formidable in the eye of an enemy.

“ In his riper years the sovereign rule and authority was too much entrusted with unprincipled and arbitrary favourites; the first of whom was Hubert de Burgh; the second the bishop of Winchester, a Poictevene by birth, and remarkable for his pride, courage, and abilities. This

prelate introduced to court several of his countrymen, who in time filled every office of profit and trust in the state, so that the barons, exasperated at so unjust a partiality, at length ventured to assure the king that, unless the foreigners were dismissed, they would exert their power, not only to drive them from the kingdom, but himself also.

“ To add to the general discontent, the king was accused of want of economy, which his oppressive extortions from the people certainly justified, and which an unsuccessful expedition to the continent had helped to increase.

“ The discontents of the people arrived at length to such maturity, that Simon Montford, Earl of Leicester, resolved to endeavour to wrest the sceptre from the feeble hand that held it ; he had married the king’s sister, and, by his skill and talents, was in high favour with the nation.

“ The confederacy was first discovered in the parliament house, where, on the

king's entrance, he found the barons in complete armour; demanding the cause of so extraordinary an appearance, they replied, with apparent submission, that it was to confirm *his* power, and to redress *their* own grievances. Henry immediately promised them all possible satisfaction; and, for that purpose, summoned a parliament to digest a new plan of government, and to elect persons proper to fill the highest offices of trust.

“ This step was by no means efficacious, as it placed the whole power in the hands of twenty-four barons, appointed for that purpose; and who, with their creatures, not only infringed on the rights of the crown, but trampled upon the freedom of the people.

“ The first opposition to this arbitrary power was from the knights of the shire, who not only declared loudly against it, but called on the king's son, Edward, at that period twenty-two years old, to interpose his authority, and save the sinking nation.

“ Prince Edward, at a very early age, had given the strongest proofs of his understanding and courage; he well knew what his father had suffered from the weakness of his character, yet for some time he refused to listen to the supplications of the people; but being at length prevailed on to concur, a parliament was called, in which the king resumed his former authority. This being considered as a breach of the late convention, a civil war ensued, and in a pitched battle, Leicester gained not only the victory, but also took the king prisoner, who, however, was soon exchanged for Prince Edward, who agreed to remain an hostage for his father’s punctual performance of the former convention.

“ Notwithstanding these advantages, Leicester had still to dread, not only the interference of foreign foes, but also the machinations of the royal party; to maintain, therefore, his power, he had recourse to the body of the people, and called a parliament, where, added to the barons of

his own party, and churchmen, he ordered returns to be made of two knights from every shire, and deputies from the boroughs, which before had been considered as too inconsiderable to be consulted. You will observe, John, that this arrangement gave rise to the first English house of commons. This parliament did not answer Leicester's wishes; the barons were disgusted at his pride and ambition, and others, who had even desired a change of rulers, by no means approved their new choice, but wished the reinstatement of the king. Leicester, aware of the storm that hung over him, made a merit of necessity; and, releasing Prince Edward from confinement, brought him to Westminster Hall, where his freedom was confirmed.

“ Notwithstanding this shew of liberty, the politic baron caused him to be still guarded by his creatures, who watched all his actions, and frustrated all his measures, till the prince, hearing that the Duke of Gloucester had taken up

arms in his cause, by a bold effort, escaped from his keepers, and joined his party.

“ A battle ensued, in which, though Leicester behaved with uncommon valour during seven hours, yet the fury and impetuosity with which Edward attacked his army, turned the victory on his side. Leicester had his horse slain under him, and was compelled to fight on foot, and though at length he cried for quarter, it was denied him ; he was not only slain, but his dead body barbarously mangled, and after the battle triumphantly sent to his wretched widow, to increase, if possible, her affliction by the sight.

“ At the commencement of the battle, Leicester had caused King Henry, who was in his custody, to be placed in the front ; in which situation, not being known by his friends, he was soon wounded in the shoulder by an arrow, and had been slain, had he not cried out, ‘ I am Henry of Winchester, your king.’ The prince, informed of his danger, ran to

the spot where he lay, and ordered him to be conveyed to a place of security.

“ By this battle the prince restored peace to the kingdom, and all being settled in a manner conformable to his wishes, he resolved upon taking the cross, and trying his valour in the Holy Land.

“ Not long after his departure the health of the old king began to decay; and the insurgents also emboldened by the prince's absence, it was found necessary to send him letters of recal.

“ The cares of government, added to the infirmities of age, pressed hard upon the king, and, ordering himself to be moved, by easy journies, from St. Edmondsbury to Westminster, he died the night of his arrival, in the sixty-fourth year of his age, and the fifty-sixth of his reign, the longest to be met with in English history.”

“ Dear papa,” said John, “ though Henry the Third might in some respects act wrong, yet he was so much better

than his father, that I cannot help being sorry for his misfortunes."

"Yet you will find," replied Mr. Wilmot, "that the greater part originated in his own misconduct; his partiality to foreigners was highly impolitic, for it was a natural consequence that his neglected nobles should be displeased, and revengeful. Favourites have usually many enemies, and the head of a state, or even the master of a family, should be cautious of shewing a marked preference for one where all are equally entitled to his favour, for it may, as in the case of Henry, not only injure himself, but ruin them also. You will find him likewise very blameable in promising the barons what he never intended to perform. A man entrusted with the happiness and welfare of thousands should consider well before he gives his word, which, once passed, should be sacred."

"How much more amiable does Prince Edward appear," said Anne, "as

an hostage for his father, and afterwards fighting his battles, than either his grandfather or uncle, whose avidity to gain the kingdom made them destitute of all natural affection."

"Edward was a brave prince," replied Charles, "and Leicester was also a valiant enemy, and mercy would well have become a conqueror."

"But," said Frances, "if he had put my father in the front of the battle, I should have hated him."

"The affection of a child to a parent might indeed have carried you far; but remember we are commanded to hate no one, not even our enemies.—For a moment, Frances, suppose yourself the prince, your father's safety insured by conquest, and Leicester disarmed, wounded, and bleeding at your feet."

"Oh! papa, I must then have forgiven him."

"I hope so," answered her father; "in all probability Leicester fell in the confusion of the battle, where there was

no time to consult the prince; but be that as it will, what appears to me an act of unfeeling cruelty was the mangling his body and sending it to his widow—who can read of such deeds, and not blush to call the perpetrators Christians?”

“ Indeed, papa, it was wicked and abominable.”

“ It was at once cruel and dastardly,” replied he; “ and did history specify the persons who devised it, they would doubtless appear to be such as feared to face him while living.”

“ How happy the prince must have been in saving his father, and in restoring peace to the kingdom,” said John.

“ Good children are ever a blessing and comfort, while wicked ones are the most dreadful scourge a parent can experience; a man may be indifferent to the malice of strangers, or only seek to guard against it, but, from a wicked child where can he fly, accustomed to consider him as a part of himself, waking or sleeping he is ever present to his remembrance;

in his dreams perhaps he appears innocent and dutiful ; but the vision over, he finds him blackened with vice—a disgrace to his family—an alien from home—unfit to live, and yet more unfit to die.”

The children, instinctively, had gathered round their parents, who affectionately embraced them.

“ ’Tis, indeed, a frightful picture,” answered Mr. Wilmot, “ but take the contrast—good children spread joy over their parental home ; their parents contemplate, with gratitude and pride, their rising virtues, and look forward to their increasing years as a staff to their own declining age ; nay, in the very hour of death itself the blessing is still continued, for the eye will but close on one happy prospect to open on another. But enough for to-night ; to-morrow I will proceed with the reign of Edward the First, in whose favour I find you are already prejudiced.”

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CONVERSATION XI.

THE party being assembled, the children requested their father to continue.

Edward the First, surnamed Longshanks.

“ EDWARD was in the Holy Land at the death of his father, 1272, but on receiving the intelligence immediately hastened to England.

“ Of the person of this prince, historians say that he was tall, and of a commanding appearance. In his disposition valiant; not to be dismayed by fatigue, or disheartened by danger; of a strong understanding, and an excellent temper.

“ During the time he was employed in the holy wars he revived the glory of the English name, and made the foes of the cross-tremble; valour, however, could not

save him from treachery, for he was stabbed in his tent by a Mahometan assassin with a poisoned dagger, and cured with great difficulty—some say by the affection of his wife Eleanor, who, regardless of her own safety, sucked the poison from the wound.

“ Though dissensions and civil wars had so long distracted the nation, all parties appeared to agree in one point, that of esteem and reverence for the king; who, taking advantage of this general inclination in his favour, resolved, as his first essay, to subdue Wales, and unite it to the English Crown.

“ The Welch were the remains of the ancient Britons, and for many ages had enjoyed their own laws, language, and customs, a freedom secured to them by their inaccessible mountains, to which they retreated in cases of danger, and from whence, with the ancient ferocity of their country, they sallied forth when opportunity served, spreading ruin and waste in the neighbouring countries.

“ Though hardy, bold, and numerous, they were incapable of withstanding a regular army, and all circumstances favouring Edward’s purpose, he ordered Lewelyn to repair to England and pay him homage for his territory. This command Lewelyn refused, unless Edward gave his son as an hostage for his safe return, which refusal afforded a pretence for war.

“ Though, on the approach of the English forces, Lewelyn had taken refuge in the mountains of Snowden, the courage and perseverance of Edward followed him thither, when, once more exhorting the Welch prince to obedience, he for the present retired. An idle prophecy prevented the prince yielding to this request, and made him resolve to hazard a battle with the English, for which purpose he marched into Radnorshire, and passed the river Wye, where his army was surprised, and defeated, while he was himself absent at a conference with his nobles : on his return, distracted at what had happened, he rushed with desper-

tion into the midst of the enemy, and quickly met the death he so ardently sought. His brother David fell in the same cause, and with him the government of Wales, which from thenceforward was blended with that of England.

“ Wales was afterwards formed into a principality, and given to the eldest son of the crown, an arrangement which added greatly to the quietness and prosperity of both, and caused all national animosity in time to be forgotten.

“ The death of Margaret Queen of Scotland, was the next spur to Edward’s ambition, the crown of Scotland being claimed by no less than twelve competitors, which were, however, at length reduced to three, and the dispute referred to the decision of the King of England, who, in return, claimed it for himself, appointing one of the disputants, John Baliol, his deputy.

“ Baliol, thus placed on the throne of Scotland, was rather a vassal than a king; on the most frivolous pretences he

was obliged to repair to London, in one year no less than six times, until weary of so heavy a yoke, he revolted, and procured the pope's absolution from his oath of allegiance to the King of England.

“ Edward was not to be offended with impunity, and in return, attacking the Scots, he overthrew them in various engagements, and at length took Baliol and sent him prisoner to London.

“ These expeditions were, however, more glorious than profitable, for the expenses of continued wars were so burthensome, that Edward was forced to raise considerable supplies by his parliament, which was at this period first modelled by him into the form it now wears.

“ The introduction of commerce, and the improvement in agriculture, had transferred many advantages to the lower class of people, for which reason it was necessary to obtain their consent to raise any considerable supply, and to repre-

sent them by deputies from the different counties.

“ At this period too the king’s council, and afterwards himself, signed the Magna Charta, which secured the people from all taxes but those levied by act of parliament.

“ Edward being in Flanders, a formidable enemy endeavoured to rescue Scotland from the yoke of England. His name was William Wallace, a Scot by birth, and famed for strength, intrepidity, and skill in war; patient in fatigue, and even famine, he set an example to his soldiers, which speedily made him the principal object of their admiration and esteem; his first exploits were confined to occasional attacks upon the English; but, emboldened by success, and his party increased by numbers, he defied them more openly, overthrew their armies, and slew their commanders.

“ King Edward, at this juncture, hastened back to retrieve these losses, and collecting the whole force of his domi-

nions, marched to Scotland, where in a battle which took place at Falkirk, he gained a complete victory, with great slaughter on the side of the Scots.

“ Previous to this event, Wallace had been made regent of the kingdom, but observing that distinction drew on him the envy of many of the nobles, he resigned it, resolving to devote himself to the welfare of his country, divested of all selfish views.

“ The English were afterwards defeated at Roslin ; but the spirit of Edward was not to be damped by disappointment or danger ; he again assembled a powerful army, and entered Scotland with a force too strong to be openly resisted, traversed the country, seized the castles, and reduced the nobles to obedience. Wallace however continued refractory, wandering from mountain to mountain and annoying the English whenever he could find an opportunity, until at length he was betrayed into the king's hands by Sir John Monteith, his particular friend, whom he

had acquainted with his place of concealment.

“ He was surprised while he lay asleep, and, loaded with chains, was sent to London, where king Edward, in order to strike the Scots with an example of terror, ordered him to be hanged and quartered.”

“ Now, papa,” interrupted Frances, “ I shall not like this king any more, for Wallace had a great right to fight for his own country.”

“ True, my love, and brave men should ever respect each other, though different interests may not suffer them to be friends. Mankind, you however must remember, at that period, were not civilized by education, as at this time, and kings and commanders sometimes through policy, sanction actions, which as private men they would recoil from.”

“ Though I always read of the death of Wallace with sorrow,” said Charles, “ yet it was necessary, if Edward wished to subdue the Scots, first to dispose of

their great leader. Wallace being in himself an host, for his banner once displayed, thousands flocked to it."

"Edward had also," added Mr. Wilmot, "made him great offers, if he would yield to him, but the Scot was too noble to purchase either greatness or safety at the expense of his country."

"The more you say, papa," said John, "the more I am sorry for him. Edward acted shamefully, to have him put to death like a malefactor."

"It was an action, indeed," replied Charles, "that casts a marked stigma on Edward's reign, for if even death was necessary, disgrace had no right to be added; but the person of whom I think with far greater detestation in this case is, Sir John Monteith, who, under the mask of friendship betrayed him."

"He was a despicable character," answered John, "and I should not have cared how much he had been disgraced."

"I know not," returned Mr. Wilmot, "how he could be more so, than by the

stain which will forever rest upon his memory from the action,—but to proceed. Though Wallace had fallen, Scotland was not long without a protector: Robert Bruce, one of the competitors for the crown, who had long been a prisoner in England, at length escaped from his guards, and resolved to make a bold effort for the freedom of his country. With a small force but desperate valour, he expelled the English that were fixed in the kingdom, caused himself to be crowned king, and though afterwards in the conflict his brothers and nearest of blood were slain, his wife and family made prisoners, and himself reduced to the greatest extremity, he maintained his cause with perseverance that baffled the power of Edward, who, after having twice conquered the kingdom, found all his labour destroyed, and his efforts to be renewed.

“ Though Edward was now verging towards the close of life, his courage maintained its accustomed vigor, he vowed

revenge against the Scots, and, collecting his army, sent a large body against them, under the command of Aymer de Valence, who, in Perthshire, gained a complete victory over Bruce. The king himself then entered the country, expecting opposition from the people, but finding on the contrary nothing but fear and submission, he was too brave to make the defenceless objects of his resentment.

“ The king returning, at Carlisle fell sick, and there being, both from his age and illness, little hope of his recovery, he sent for his son Edward, surnamed of Carnarvon, where he was born, and among other requests, desired that his first attempt should be the final subjugation of Scotland, until the completion of which, he desired to remain unburied.

“ He also charged him on his blessing, not to recall Pierre Gavestone, who had been banished for joining in his (the prince's) misconduct, and finally, he commanded him to make the welfare of his people the object of his care.

“ Edward’s illness increasing, he died in the year 1307, in the sixty-ninth year of his age, at Burgh in Cumberland, and in the thirty-fourth of his reign.—Though no character is perfect, his rule had added more to the glory and prosperity of his country, than that of any king who had preceded him. He quelled the commotions of his nobles, by his bravery kept the surrounding countries in awe, extended the privileges of the lower order of his subjects, and made many good laws and requisitions in regard to commerce.”

“ Pray Sir,” said Anne, “ was it not Edward who raised so many crosses in honour of his queen Eleanor ?”

“ It was ; she died near Lincoln, but her body was brought to Westminster, to be interred, and at every place where her corpse stopped on the road, he caused a cross to be erected, the remains of which, in some places, are yet to be seen ; the last was Charing-Cross, which has since been replaced, by an equestrian statue of Charles the first.”

“In the reign of Edward,” said Charles, “pence, halfpence, and farthings were first made round, before which period, the penny was a double cross, so thin that it might be easily broken into halfpence or farthings, as the holder thought fit.”

“I thank you, Charles,” said Mr. Wilmot, “and am sorry that I must leave you for this evening ; to-morrow we will renew our conversation.”

CONVERSATION XII.

“THE party being assembled, Mr. Wilmot, who saw he gave pleasure to his children, by the relation, immediately began.

“I must to-day,” said he, “give you a striking contrast to the character of Edward the first in the life of his unhappy son, a weak prince, whose follies were so severely punished, that humanity forces us to weep, while our reason teaches us to condemn.

Edward the Second—surnamed of Carnarvon.

“Edward succeeded his father in the year 1307, in the twenty-third year of his age: his person was said to be comely, but his disposition unsteady, and so addicted to pleasure, that he neglected the more essen-

tial duties of his government, and thereby speedily lost that estimation in the eyes of his nobles, that his father had ever preserved. Instead of prosecuting the war against Scotland, he took no steps to check the progress of the active Bruce, and finally, recalled from banishment Pierre Gavestone, though he had solemnly promised his dying father to the contrary.

“ Pierre Gavestone was possessed of every superficial accomplishment calculated to please weak minds, but destitute of those solid virtues that procure esteem. He was handsome, brave, active and witty ; but to counterbalance these advantages, he was vicious, effeminate and trifling, qualities that were too similar to the disposition of Edward to be disagreeable to him.

“ His first step to dignify this favourite, was bestowing on him the Lordship of Wallingford, the Earldoms of Cornwall and the Isle of Man, distinctions which so inflated the mind of Gavestone, that he treated the Barons with haughtiness, de-

rision and contempt ; while they on their part, sought revenge both on him, and on the king, forming a large party, secretly approved by the queen, and at the head of which was the Earl of Lancaster.

“ The king, naturally timid, alarmed at the conspiracy, yielded at the request of the Barons, and banished Gavestone to Ireland ; but incapable of stability, he soon after recalled him with redoubled honour, procuring for him a match with the Earl of Gloucester’s sister, and enriching him with gifts from the royal treasury, which Gavestone, for security, caused to be conveyed out of the kingdom.

“ Incensed at such conduct, the Barons flew to arms, upbraiding Edward with his conduct and breach of promise, while that weak monarch, instead of preparing for resistance, only sought for safety, and accompanying his favourite to Scarborough, he left him as he thought secure, while he himself returned to York, to endeavour to appease the tumult.

“ In the meantime, Gavestone was

besieged in Scarborough, where his fears soon led him to capitulate ; stipulating that he would remain for two months a prisoner to the earl of Pembroke, until an accommodation took place between the king and his nobles.

“ Though Pembroke agreed to this arrangement, he did not intend to let Gavestone escape so easily, and conducting him to the castle of Doddington, he left him under a slight guard, when the Earl of Warwick, having notice, attacked the castle, and seizing on the person of Gavestone conveyed him to Warwick, where the discontented Barons were assembled, and who after a short debate, ordered him to be taken to a place called Black-low, and his head to be severed from his body.

“ Soon after this, Edward suffered a signal defeat from the Scots army under Bruce, near Bannockburn. The Scots, who had so many times fled before his father, in their turn triumphed, and not only several of the English nobles were slain, but the king saved himself with the greatest difficulty by flight.

“ At this period, the king had selected a new favourite, called Hugh de Spencer, a young man of noble family, and highly accomplished. His father, who was much in years, was respected for his valour, integrity and wisdom, but the royal favour so abundantly bestowed on his son obscured all his virtues; for the weak prince forgetting the lesson he had received in the treatment of Gavestone, loaded his new favourite with honours, and even seized unjustly on the estates of some of his nobles to bestow them on the Spencers.”

“ Now, indeed,” interrupted John, “ you may well call Edward a weak prince, he had himself to blame for whatever happened, I am sure I shall not pity him.”

“ Do not be too certain of that,” answered Mr. Wilmot, “ but to continue; exasperated at this fresh proof of the king’s unjust partiality, the Earls of Lancaster and Hereford, again had recourse to arms, while the parliament decreed a forfeiture of the estates of the Spencers, father and

son, and doomed them to perpetual banishment. This blow roused Edward from his lethargy, and at the head of thirty thousand men, he took the field, and pressed the Earl of Lancaster so closely, that he was at length made prisoner, when he met with as little mercy as his party had before shewn to Gavestone, for mounted on a mean horse, and treated with the greatest indignity, he was led to a hill near Pomfret, and there beheaded.

“ The rebellion thus crushed, the greater part of the forfeited estates were bestowed on young Spencer, whose pride rose in proportion, and whose haste to accumulate, made him guilty of many acts of injustice and rapine.

“ The king was now doomed to meet with an enemy, of all others to a feeling mind, the most dreadful; I mean his queen Isabel, a woman naturally cruel, daring, and haughty, who, exasperated at his conduct, and emboldened by his weakness, fled to France; openly refusing to return, unless the Spencers were not

only removed from court, but banished the kingdom.

“ By this step Isabel became popular in England, where Spencer was universally disliked ; all the discontented who fled their country, or that were banished from it, joined her party, until at length conceiving herself sufficiently strong, she, with three thousand armed men, sailed from Dort harbour, and landed on the coast of Suffolk. Her party was immediately joined by numbers ; and the king had the vexation to find that the disaffection was general over his kingdom. A garrison, on whom he most depended, he placed in the castle of Bristol, under the command of the elder Spencer, but the troops mutinied, and the unfortunate governor was delivered up, and condemned by the exasperated Barons to death, and immediately hanged on a gibbet in his armour. His body was afterwards cut to pieces, and thrown to the dogs, and his head sent to Winchester, where it was fixed on a pole, and exposed to the insults of the populace.”

“ Dear papa,” said Frances, “ the people were very cruel at that time.”

“ They were, and each party appeared to endeavour to outdo the other in barbarity. Where a life, from guilt, is unavoidably forfeited to the laws of our country, we have now to thank heaven, that has enlightened mankind sufficiently to recoil from those unnecessary cruelties, which disgraced those who devised them equally with the offender.

“ Hugh Spencer did not long survive his father ; following the fortunes of the wretched king, he was taken in an obscure convent in Wales. The merciless queen, adding insult to cruelty, had not patience to wait the formality of a trial, but ordering him to be brought into her presence, appeared to take a savage pleasure in viewing his distress. He was at length executed on a gibbet, and his head afterwards severed and sent to London, where the citizens, with brutal triumph, fixed it on London bridge.

“ The king, in the meantime, fell into

the power of his adversaries, who conducted him to the capital, where, amidst the insults and reproaches of the people, he was led prisoner to the tower, and a charge exhibited against him, of indolence, incapacity to govern, a love of pleasure, and being swayed by evil counsellors, to the detriment of the people. These charges being allowed, the parliament voted him to resign the crown, and appointed his son Edward, a youth of fourteen, to reign in his stead ; the queen to act as regent during his minority."

"Notwithstanding Edward's errors," said Mrs. Wilmot, "'tis impossible to avoid feeling for him ; the monarch of a great kingdom, subdued, insulted and despised ; the principal agent of his disgrace, his wife, and the mother of his children. Had the queen been truly a good wife, she would surely have endeavoured to awaken him from the infatuation he shewed for his favourites,—not have wrested his crown from him, and confined him in a prison."

“ But Isabel was not a good wife,” replied Mr. Wilmot ; “ naturally proud, vicious, and revengeful, the weakness of the king only furnished her with a pretence to gratify her vice and ambition ; as in return for his neglect, regardless of her own honour, she formed an attachment with a young nobleman called Mortimer.”

“ Dear papa,” said John, “ though Edward was found unfit to govern, I hope he was well used.”

“ Indolence, love of pleasure, and yielding to evil counsellors, seldom I believe have met with a more severe punishment than that which fell to the lot of the unfortunate Edward,” answered Mr. Wilmot. “ The parliament voted a pension for his support, but his life was not only a reproach to the conduct of Isabel, but also kept her in fear of some steps being taken in his favour, and made her resolve to free herself from both. The deposed monarch survived his misfortunes but a short time ; his death was

resolved, and no means left untried to hasten it, that insult or barbarity could devise. He was consigned to the custody of the Earl of Leicester, but that nobleman treating him with some respect and pity, he was deprived of his office, and the trust given to Lord Berkley, Maltrevs, and Gournay. With these two last, he was sent from prison to prison, and at length to Berkley castle; by the way, his tormentors obliged him to ride bare-headed, and if at any time he fell asleep, they awoke him, fed him with what he particularly disliked, and when he spoke, turned his sorrows to a jest, treating him as a madman, and to complete these insults, having placed a crown of hay on his head, caused the common soldiers to utter shouts of derision.

“ History likewise records that as they were pursuing their journey towards the last place of this unhappy monarch’s confinement, fearing he would be recognised, and assisted by some of his friends, they resolved to alter his appearance, by

shaving his head and beard, the latter of which, it was the fashion of those times to wear long, for which purpose they ordered him to dismount from his horse, and seating him on a mole-hill, they took water from a ditch, and prepared to shave him. Edward prayed to have warm water, but was answered with insolence, that what they had would serve. Though he had borne his former indignities with patience, at this insult his fortitude forsook him, and alluding to the tears which he shed, he said, "that in spite of them he would have *warm water*."

"Oh, papa!" exclaimed John, "I thought I should not have been sorry for Edward whatever befel him, but his punishment surely exceeded his faults."

"They are indeed lost in pity for his sufferings," answered Mr. Wilmot. "On his arrival at Berkley castle, his tormentors finding his health not sufficiently impaired to their wishes, and fearing a revolution in his favour, it was resolved to put him to death; for which purpose

Lord Berkley was first ordered to leave the castle, by which the care of the unhappy Edward of course devolved on Maltrevers and Gournay.

“The dark deed was now soon perpetrated; his cruel keepers, having concerted a method of putting him to death, without the appearance of external violence, one night rushed into his chamber, as he lay in bed, and forcibly holding him down, through a pipe, conveyed a red-hot iron into his entrails, thus consuming his bowels without disfiguring his body, hoping, by that wicked stratagem, to conceal the murder; but his dreadful shrieks, which were heard at a considerable distance from the castle, and afterwards the confession of one of the accomplices, revealed the whole of this shocking act, which can never be heard, or related, without horror.”

John and Frances had wept during the latter part of this relation. “Indeed, indeed, papa,” said the first, “when I said I should not be sorry

whatever happened to the poor king, I did not then suppose such cruelty could ever have been acted."

"Nor any humanized heart, John," answered Mr. Wilmot. "Poor Edward's punishment was indeed severe, but we will trust it was some expiation with the Father of mercies for his former errors."

"Pray, papa," said Frances, "was any thing done to the murderers?"

"The queen's adviser in this dark deed was said to be the Bishop of Hereford; and after it was completed, to conceal their part in the act, Gournay and Maltrevers were banished, the former of whom, three years after, was taken, in order to be sent to England, but was beheaded at sea, to prevent his impeaching his employers; which shews that the perpetrators of wickedness can have no trust or reliance in each other. Maltrevers fled to Germany, and remained long concealed, and, as some say, died repentant."

“ But, papa, the queen was the most wicked of them all; what became of her?”

“ That you will hear, as I proceed. The wicked are sometimes permitted to live for a length of time, and, for that very reason, are surely most punished; for they bear a sting about them both day and night. But enough for this afternoon, I shall be ready to continue to-morrow.”

CONVERSATION XIII.

THE party being assembled, John, addressing Mr. Wilmot, said, "Dear papa, I am impatient to hear whether the young Edward, when in his power, did not take some steps against the oppressors of his father."

"I will satisfy your curiosity as speedily as possible," replied Mr. Wilmot.

Edward the Third.

"EDWARD, I have already told you, was but fourteen when his father was deposed, and that his mother Isabel was regent, during his minority; a trust, for which she was assigned so large a dowry, that a third of the revenues scarcely remained for the king.

"Edward succeeded in the year 1327; he was agreeable in his person, in temper provident and circumspect, expert in war,

and gifted with a good understanding. Twelve persons, during his minority, were appointed his privy-council, and though Mortimer, the queen's favourite, might be expected among the number, he declined it with affected moderation, though it was well known, that he secretly influenced every transaction.

“ As Edward increased in years, he resolved to throw off a yoke so disagreeable to the nation, and so disgraceful to himself.

“ Mortimer had been created Earl of March, and his pride and ambition had risen to such a height, that his retinue was more numerous than that of the king, whom he treated with a familiarity that disgusted all ranks of people, who readily surmised that he aimed at regal power.

“ The queen and Mortimer had for some time resided at the castle of Nottingham, in the most criminal manner. The castle was strongly guarded, the gates locked every night, and the keys carried to the queen.

“ It was therefore secretly agreed between the king and his friends to endeavour to seize them, in this fortress; to effect which, they drew to their party the keeper of the castle, who, entering into their design, informed them of a secret subterraneous passage, which had formerly been an outlet, but was now hidden with rubbish, and known only to one or two persons.

“ By this aperture, the young king and his nobles, well armed, entered the castle at night by torch-light, and proceeding with caution, reached the queen’s apartment, where, leaving the king at the entrance, they rushed in and seized Mortimer, having first slain one of the guards, and wounded another. Leading their prisoner forth, the queen followed, entreating them to spare ‘ her gentle Mortimer;’ but the barons were deaf to her entreaties, and it became her turn to sue in vain for that mercy she had refused to others.

“ The castle being yielded to the king,

Mortimer was sent to London, where the parliament immediately condemned him, without suffering him to make his defence, or to call any witness.

“ He was hanged at a place called the Elms, and the body left for two days on the gibbet, after which it was buried in the Grey Friars church.”

“ I am glad, papa,” said John, “ that one of the murderers met with his deserts, pray what afterwards became of the queen ?”

“ Isabel, though undoubtedly the most culpable, was shielded from death by the dignity of her rank, and her consanguinity to the king ; but she was discarded from all share of power, and confined for life to the castle of Rising, upon a pension of one thousand pounds a year. From this confinement she was never after set free ; and though the king, to preserve appearances, paid her every year a visit of ceremony, yet she was an object of universal hatred and contempt, and continued for above twenty-five years after, a miserable

monument of guilt and fallen ambition."

"She had, however, time for repentance, and, we will hope, profited by it," said Mrs. Wilmot. "To a woman of her overbearing tyrannic spirit, her punishment was worse than death, for, shunned by all ranks of people, and even by her own son, what must have been her feelings, when age and infirmities came upon her?"

"They could not be worse than she deserved," said John. "But pray, papa, go on."

"Soon after, Edward gained great good-will of the people, by a successful irruption he made into Scotland, in which, in one battle at Hallidown Hill, thirty thousand of the Scots were slain.

"His next expedition was against France, to which he laid claim in right of his mother Isabel, who was daughter to Philip the Fair, and sister to the three last kings of France.

"Edward, previous to this expedition,

consulted his parliament on the propriety of the undertaking ; and having gained their approbation, and a supply of wool, to traffic with the Flemings, attended by a powerful force, he set sail.

“ The first advantage the English gained, was in an engagement at sea, wherein the French lost two hundred and thirty ships, and thirty thousand seamen.

“ The landing of Edward in France caused universal consternation. Caen was taken and plundered, and many of the towns in the way to Paris shared the same fate, until at length the French had no other resource than to destroy their bridges, to stop the progress of the invaders.

“ In the meantime, Philip, the King of France, prepared to repel the enemy ; he had stationed one of his generals, Godemar de Faye, with an army on the opposite side of the river Somme, over which Edward was to pass, while he himself, at the head of an army of an

hundred thousand men, advanced to give the English battle.

“ As the armies were in sight of each other, an engagement was earnestly wished on both sides; and though the force was so very disproportionate, the combined armies of the French amounting to an hundred and twenty thousand men, and that of the English to only thirty thousand, Edward, willing to gratify the impetuosity of his men, resolved on battle, and accordingly chose an advantageous station near the village of Cressy, where he awaited the first attack of the enemy.

“ His army was divided into three lines, the first commanded by his son Edward, surnamed the Black Prince, the second, conducted by the Earls of Northampton and Arundel, and the third, which was kept as a corps de reserve, was commanded by himself.

“ On the other part, Philip, impelled by resentment, and confident in the superiority of his numbers, led his army

in three divisions opposite to the English ; the first consisted of fifteen thousand Genoese bowmen, the second was commanded by his brother, and the third by himself.

“ At three in the afternoon, the famous battle of Cressy began, by the French king commanding the Genoese archers to charge ; but these were so fatigued with their march, that they entreated a little rest before they engaged.

“ The Count Alençon, informed of their request, rode up, and calling them cowards, ordered them to begin the onset without delay, which command, though obeyed, answered but little purpose, for a heavy shower which had fallen, had so relaxed their bow-strings, that their effect was destroyed.”

“ On the other part, the English archers, who had kept their weapons in cases, were favoured by a sudden gleam of sunshine, and let fly their arrows so thick, and with such good aim, that the Geno-

ese were immediately thrown into confusion.

“The Prince of Wales, with extraordinary presence of mind, took advantage of the dismay that reigned among them, and leading his line forward, attacked them in the most vigorous manner; the French cavalry in the meantime wheeling round to cover the disordered archers, had begun to enclose this division, which, however, was quickly sustained by the Earls of Arundel and Northampton. The prince appeared foremost in the face of danger, by his valour turning the fortune of the day; in the very heat of the battle, even veterans viewed with admiration and wonder the conduct of a boy of sixteen, and fearing that his matchless daring might prove fatal, they dispatched an officer to the king, requesting more succours. King Edward, who had viewed the whole engagement from an eminence, eagerly inquired if his son was dead; but being answered in the nega-

tive, and informed that he was giving astonishing proofs of bravery, the king replied, 'Then he shall have no assistance from me, the honour of the field shall be his, let him shew himself worthy of the trust reposed in him; and to his own merit alone be indebted for victory.'

" This speech was repeated to the prince, who, emulous to deserve the opinion his father entertained of him, at the head of his men made a fresh attack on the French cavalry, in which their bravest commander, Count Alençon, was slain; a misfortune which was the prelude to their total defeat; for, deprived of their leader, the whole army took to flight, and were pursued and slain, until the darkness stopped the carnage.

" Of the French, great numbers fell, while on the side of the English the loss only amounted to three knights, one esquire, and an inconsiderable number of inferior rank.

" This victory obtained, Edward resolved to secure himself in future an easy

entrance into France, and for that purpose laid siege to Calais, which was vigorously defended by a citizen named John de Vienne, who nobly withstood all the efforts of King Edward, for a whole year, and was only at length obliged to yield through famine.

“ Edward, to punish the citizens for the trouble they had given him, demanded, as an expiation, the lives of six of the principal inhabitants, who presently came forward, and voluntarily offered themselves, with ropes about their necks, as victims to his indignation; but the Queen Philippa, who had then joined ~~the king, so~~ warmly interested herself in the favour of those brave men, that she not only procured their pardon, but caused them to be dismissed with honour.”

“ Philippa was an excellent character,” said Anne, “ and frequently stepped forward to soften the anger of the king, as I will inform you hereafter.”

“ Philippa,” resumed Mr. Wilmot, “ did

not only possess the softer qualities of her sex, but, in cases of danger, shewed a noble and masculine spirit. On her return to England, the Scots, having seized the opportunity of Edward's absence, invaded the frontiers of England, with a numerous army under the command of David Bruce, their king.

“ Lionel, Edward's second son, was too young to be entrusted with the English forces. Philippa therefore resolved to take upon herself the conduct of the expedition, appointing the Lord Percy to be general under her.

“ All being prepared, she met the enemy at Nevil Cross, near Durham, and gave them battle, when the Scots, who laughed at the idea of an undisciplined army headed by a woman, soon found their mistake, for their army was driven from the field, fifteen thousand of their men slain, and King David and seven of his nobles made prisoners, and sent in triumph to London.

“ Not long after, the Black Prince

gained a signal victory near Poitiers, in which the King of France was taken captive, and sent to England.

“ Though two kings being made prisoners at the same time was considered as highly honourable to the conquerors, yet glory was the only advantage they gained, for England, drained by perpetual contests, was unable to continue an army in the field.

“ John, King of France, died in the Savoy, and was succeeded in his kingdom by his son Charles, who cautiously forebore any decisive engagement with the English, but harassed them wherever he could find an opportunity, until at length he regained the greater part of what had been before conquered.

“ What tended to the success of the French was, that the Black Prince was not only destitute of supplies, but was also himself afflicted with a consumptive disorder, which at length obliged him to return to England.

“ Great as had been the reign of Ed-

ward the Third, a heavy gloom was spread over the latter part of his days, by the decay of the Black Prince, who died in the forty-sixth year of his age, universally lamented, and leaving behind him a character without a single blemish.

“ This loss so affected the king, that his disposition appeared to lose all its energy; he neglected the duties of his state, and left his kingdom to be plundered by his ministers. He however did not survive the prince above a year, dying at Shene, in the sixty-fifth year of his age, and the fifty-first of his reign, from his latent weakness neglected by his nobles, and but little regretted by his subjects.

“ Edward left many children by his queen Philippa, but was succeeded by his grandson Richard, the son of the Black Prince.”

“ Edward the Third,” said Charles, “ was a very different character from his father, and the activity and spirit of his youth must plead for the infirmities of

his age. The loss of such a son as the Black Prince might well overpower him, and make him regardless of business."

"I differ from you in opinion," replied Mr. Wilmot. "The duties of a king are far different from those of a private man; he should be the father of his people, and for the death of one child has no right to neglect and ruin the rest."

"Though a great ruler," said Anne, "he appears to me to have had many misfortunes; the horrid death of his father, the disgrace of his mother, and, finally, the perpetual wars in which he was engaged."

"You judge truly, my dear child; to a virtuous mind, the two first were indeed painful remembrances; and the last kept him in perpetual disquiet, as well as impoverishing his people; that reign which can with honour be free from the horrors of war, is indeed blessed; but such has ever been the ambition of mankind, and such the jarring interests of courts, as to render its abolition impossible."

“ Papa,” said John, “ the death of the Black Prince was a great loss to the kingdom.”

“ It was, but I trust a great gain to himself: he died, John, the admiration of the age in which he lived, and idolized by his country; what more could time have done for him?”

“ Anne,” said Frances, “ you promised to tell us something respecting Queen Philippa; have you forgotten it?”

“ No, sister. Soon after the birth of the Black Prince, a grand entertainment, then called a tournament, of three days continuance, was held in London, and at which was present the whole court. A stage or gallery that was erected for the queen and the ladies to see the shew, by the carelessness of the carpenters, fell, and though none were particularly hurt, the king was so exasperated, that he declared they should be punished in the most exemplary manner; but Philippa, who truly considered the fault as unintentional, threw herself at the king’s feet,

and pleaded so warmly for the offenders, that, though with difficulty, she obtained their pardon—an action that made her much beloved.”

“ I thank you, Anne,” said Mr. Wilmot, “ deeds of mercy, of all others, make people beloved; I dare say, if the carpenters ever built another gallery for the queen, they would take especial care to render it secure, and that from affection, rather than a fear of punishment.”

“ Doubtless, they would,” answered John, “ but will you please, papa, to continue your history ?”

“ This evening you must excuse me, as I am engaged; to-morrow I shall be at your service. Good night.”

CONVERSATION XIV.

"PAPA," said John, "I long to hear the reign of Richard the Second; the Black Prince was so great a character, that I am highly interested for his son."

"At the early part of his reign," replied Mr. Wilmot, "the nation formed the most flattering prognostics, but they were greatly disappointed."

"Pray, papa," said Frances, "why was Edward called the Black Prince?"

"From the colour of his armour; but to proceed—

Richard the Second.

"RICHARD the Second succeeded his grandfather in the year 1377. At his accession, being but eleven years old, the government was vested in the hands

of his three uncles, the Dukes of Lancaster, York, and Gloucester.

“ The late king had left the kingdom involved in expensive wars, and the large sums collected to defray the continued armaments, caused universal murmurs; one tax in particular, as it fell equally heavy on the poor as on the rich. This was a levy of three groats on every person above the age of fifteen, and which being entrusted to collectors, to be gathered, they were said to be, sometimes, guilty of the most brutal violences.

“ The first person who openly resisted these tax-gatherers, was a blacksmith, named Wat Tyler, at Dartford in Kent. His daughter had been grossly insulted by one of these men, whom her father, in the heat of passion, had struck dead with the hammer with which he was at work; an action which was applauded by the by-standers, who resolved to defend his conduct, and appointed him their leader in the common cause. The fire of sedition once kindled, spread rapidly; the

rebels soon amounted to a hundred thousand men, and being composed of the dregs of the people, committed the most horrid excesses, spreading desolation and murder wherever they came.

“ The young king, then not sixteen, had been placed in the tower for safety; but Wat Tyler having led a party of his men from Blackheath to Smithfield, he met him there, demanding a conference, and promising redress to the grievances complained of.

“ Wat Tyler complied, and ordering his men to retire, boldly advanced to the king, who was surrounded by his nobles, and proceeded to make his demands. In the heat of the contest, Wat Tyler repeatedly raised his sword, as it was judged in a menacing posture, which insolence so exasperated William Walworth, then mayor of London, that taking no time to reflect on the temerity of the action, or that he exposed the king to the most imminent danger, he struck the rebel leader on the head with his mace,

when one of the knights who attended the king rode up, and instantly dispatched him with his sword.

“ The rebels, on seeing their leader fall, prepared for revenge ; but Richard, with great presence of mind and courage, for his years, prevented their carrying their designs into execution ; for advancing towards them he said, ‘ What, my people, would you kill your king ? Be not concerned for the loss of your leader, follow me, I will be your chief, and grant whatever you desire.’

“ The multitude, awed by the manner of the young king, immediately obeyed, and followed him to the fields, where he granted them charters of amnesty and enfranchisement, but which grants were afterwards annulled in parliament.

“ This spirited action made the nation expect much from the future manhood of the king, who, on attaining the age of twenty-two, took the reins of government into his own hands, and made a total change in the great offices of the

crown ; but it quickly appeared that the hopes of the people were futile ; for Richard, once master of himself, neglected all business, was governed by his creatures, and degraded his rank by mean familiarities, which left him but the phantom of royalty.

“ The king’s uncle, the duke of Gloucester, on a slight suspicion, was arrested and sent to Calais, where he was soon after murdered in prison, which action, added to others equally odious, began to spread discontent over the kingdom, and to prepare the public mind for a change that afterwards took place.

“ The duke of Hereford, surnamed Bolinbroke, from the place of his birth, in parliament accused the duke of Norfolk, of having in a private conversation spoken disrespectfully of the king. Norfolk denied the charge, gave Hereford the lie, and offered to prove his innocence by single combat, which method, as there was no legal proof, was agreed to.

“ On the day appointed for the decision

of the dispute, the combatants had scarcely began their career, when the king commanded them to desist, and ordered both to leave the kingdom. The duke of Norfolk he banished for life, and the duke of Hereford, for ten years; thus one was condemned without being *charged* with any crime, and the other, without any guilt being *proved* against him. The duke of Norfolk retired to Venice, where he soon after died of vexation and grief.

“ Hereford bore his punishment more mildly, and so pleased the king by his submission, that he consented to shorten the term of his banishment four years, at the same time granting him letters patent to secure to him any inheritance which might fall during his absence. Soon after this arrangement, the duke of Lancaster, father to Hereford, died, when king Richard, regardless of his word, revoked the letters patent, and seized upon the inheritance.

“ Hereford was not proof against such repeated injuries; his indignation knew

no bounds ; and he even conceived a design of dethroning a man who had shewn himself so unworthy of power.

“ For this enterprise he was particularly qualified, as he was cool, discerning, and brave ; he was also greatly beloved by the English, who were highly dissatisfied with the extortion, imprudence, and weakness of Richard.

“ At this critical time, the king, suspecting no danger, passed into Ireland, to chastise the rebels, when Hereford, now Lancaster, immediately seized the opportunity of his absence, and with a retinue of only sixty men, landed at Ravenspur, in Yorkshire, where he was joined by the earl of Northumberland, and his son Henry Percy, who from his ardent valour, was called Hotspur ; these noblemen bringing with them the whole of their dependants ; many others immediately followed their example, so that in a few days Lancaster found himself at the head of sixty thousand men.

“ Richard, in the meantime, remained

in Ireland, ignorant of the misfortune which awaited him; for contrary winds during three weeks had prevented any news reaching him from England, and on his arrival at Milford Haven, with a body of twenty thousand men, found himself in the most dreadful dilemma, surrounded by an enraged people, and without a friend on whom he could rely for counsel or assistance, for as his favour and esteem had been lavished on the imprudent and unworthy, they shrunk from him in the hour of danger, an example that was even followed by his soldiers, so that he shortly had but six thousand men to follow his standard.

“ In this distressful state, nothing was left for Richard but submission; he therefore sent Lancaster word that he was ready to yield to whatever terms he should propose, and earnestly requested a conference. The duke appointed a castle near Chester for this purpose; in the road to which, Richard, with a small retinue, was completely betrayed into the power of his

enemies, and conducted to Flint, where Lancaster attended with his whole army; himself in complete armour, but his head bare, as a token of respect. Richard received him courteously, and bade him welcome, which the duke returned by a cool respectful bow, replying ‘ My lord, I am returned sooner than you appointed, because your people say, that for twenty-two years, you have governed with rigour and imprudence, at which they are highly dissatisfied, but, if it please God, I will assist you to govern better in future.’

“ To this humiliating speech, the king replied, ‘ If it pleases you, good cousin, it pleases me likewise.’ ”

“ Indeed, papa,” interrupted John, “ I would not be a king for the whole world, such vicissitudes must be dreadful.”

“ They are so,” returned Mr. Wilmot. “ The errors of kings are far more fatal than those of common men ; the greatest chance for happiness in this life, is surely a private station, as that is the least

subject to change, and has a more contracted number of duties to fulfil."

"The haughty reply of Lancaster," resumed Mr. Wilmot, "was not the only mortification Richard was to endure, for the duke ordering the king's horses to be prepared, two wretched beasts were produced, on one of which was placed the king, and on the other, his favourite, the earl of Salisbury. In this manner, they were conveyed to Chester, with the sound of trumpets and every mark of triumph, and in the same manner, afterward conducted through every town, until they reached London; Richard having the continued mortification during the whole journey to hear the exclamations of the multitude, who scoffed and derided him, while they made the air resound with their cries of 'Long live our deliverer, the good duke of Lancaster.'"

"Pardon me, Sir," said Charles, "but, with your permission, I will relate to my brother John, the entrance of Henry into the capital as given by Shakspeare,

which subject, interesting at all times, is rendered doubly so, by the language of the poet." .

" You will particularly oblige me," answered his father.

—— " The Duke, great Bolinbroke,
Mounted upon a hot and fiery steed,
With slow but stately pace, kept on his course,
While all tongues cried, God save thee Bolinbroke.
You would have thought the very windows spake,
So many greedy looks of young and old,
Through casements darted their desiring eyes
Upon his visage; and that all the walls
With painted imag'ry had said at once,
Jesu preserve thee! welcome Bolinbroke!
Whilst he from one side to the other turning,
Bare-headed, lower than his proud steed's neck,
Bespoke them thus;—I thank you, countrymen!"

As Charles paused, Mr. Wilmot addressing him, said, " You will yet more oblige us, my son, if you can furnish us with the contrast, in the reception of the fallen Richard."

Charles continued.

————— “men’s eyes

Did scowl on Richard : no man cry’d God save him !
 No joyful tongue gave him his welcome home :
 But dust was thrown upon his sacred head ;
 Which with such gentle sorrow he shook off,
 (His face still combating with tears and smiles,
 The badges of his grief and patience)
 That had not God for some strange purpose steel’d
 The hearts of men, they must perforce have melted ;
 And barbarism itself have pitied him.”

“ Poor, poor Richard !” exclaimed Frances, “ his sorrows surely were great enough, without insult being added to the number.”

“ They were, my love ; but the popular opinion is like a torrent, which, while it rages, bears down all before it ; in the confusion of the moment, there was no time to think of the sorrows of an unfortunate individual. But to continue.

“ Richard, confined a close prisoner in the Tower,” resumed Mr. Wilmot, “ and treated with contempt and insolence, his spirits sunk with his fortune, and with few remonstrances, he was induced to sign a deed by which he renounced the

crown, as not possessing sufficient power to govern."

"What a humiliating concession," interrupted Charles, "and equally so to the people, as to himself; for as he had reigned twenty-two years, they must have possessed as little discernment as he did capacity, not to have found it out before."

"The observation is just, but the deed was simply an instrument to depose the king, and on which Lancaster might found his claim with some appearance of justice, though the duke of Clarence, second son to Edward the Third, had left a grandson, born of his daughter and Mortimer, earl of March, whose right to the crown was evidently prior to that of the house of Lancaster, and hence arose the contest between those noble branches, which for so many years after deluged the land with blood.

"When Richard was deposed, and Lancaster elected in his stead, by the name of Henry the Fourth, it was agreed that Richard should be imprisoned in

some secure place, and concealed from his partisans ; but the fears of the usurper were alone to be stifled by the death of Richard, and as instruments of evil, I grieve to observe, are ever ready to be purchased with money, such were sent to the castle of Pomfret, where the king had been removed."

"Oh ! papa," interrupted Frances, "I dread to hear you continue, the horrible death of Edward the Second is so fresh in my memory that I tremble for Richard."

"Their fates were but too similar, my love," replied Mr. Wilmot. "Those kings alike from the imprudence and general weakness of their government, both met with a violent and cruel death ; for the murderers repairing to the castle of Pomfret, to the number of eight, are said to have rushed into the unhappy Richard's apartment, and by the ferocity of their manner, soon informed him of their errand. Richard, resolved on selling his life as dearly as possible, wrested a pole-axe from one of them, and soon laid four of

them dead at his feet ; but his single strength was unable to support the unequal contest, and he was at last overpowered and slain by a blow from a pole-axe ; though some authors assert that he was starved to death in prison.

“ Thus perished the unfortunate Richard, in the thirty-fourth year of his age, and the twenty-third of his reign, leaving no posterity.”

“ If I do not mistake,” said Charles, “ he mourned the death of Anne, his wife, so heavily, that he left the palace of Shene, now Richmond, where she died, to fall into ruins.”

“ He behaved very nobly while young, in coming to meet the rebels,” said John.

“ He did,” replied Mr. Wilmot “ and had the rest of his actions corresponded, there is no doubt but that he would have maintained the throne until a natural death deprived him of it, for his injustice, in a great measure occasioned the crimes of the duke of Lancaster, who could have formed no pretence to usurp the crown.”

if Richard had not deprived him of his inheritance."

"As it is yet early, papa," said John,
"will you be kind enough to continue?"
"Willingly."

Henry the Fourth.

"HENRY the Fourth was the son of John of Gaunt, duke of Lancaster; he began his reign in the year 1399, and though he ruled with prudence and skill, soon found that even those qualities could not make his usurpation forgotten, for the most violent animosity broke out among the barons, and which, according to the times, terminated in combats, and cruel executions; in which, violence and arbitrary power stifled the voice of the law.

"The most dangerous conspiracy formed against Henry, was by his former adherent the earl of Northumberland,

who, in a skirmish between the Scots and English, had taken several noble prisoners, which he detained at his own castle of Alnwick.

“ At that period, by the laws of war, their ransom belonged to those who had made them captive ; but Henry, who wished to increase his demands in making peace with Scotland, commanded the earl not to accept ransom for his prisoners, a command he considered as the greatest insult and injury, and which made him resolve to overturn a throne which he had the chief hand in establishing, and to place Mortimer, earl of March, the just heir on the regal seat.”

“ The action would have been more praise-worthy,” said Charles, “ had it not originated in anger and disappointment.”

“ True,” replied his father, “ but I am sorry to say, we often find the most unworthy passions, the first source of good, as well as of evil actions ; this was exemplified in the present instance ; for what justice had not before effected, in behalf

of Mortimer, personal pique endeavoured to accomplish.

“ When all things were prepared for the intended insurrection, the earl was suddenly taken ill ; but his absence was supplied by his son, Henry Percy, called Hotspur, who, taking the command of the forces, advanced towards Shrewsbury, in order to join Glendower, a Welch chieftain, lately released from prison.

“ King Henry, informed of the designs against him, collected his army, and hastened to meet his enemies.

“ On the approach of the armies each published a manifesto. Henry accused Northumberland of rebellion and ingratitude ; on the other side, the king was accused of the murder of Richard, the usurpation of the crown, and the imprisonment of Mortimer, the lawful heir, for whose ransom, when prisoner to Glendower, he had refused to let the Percys treat, though he was their near relation.

“ The armies were nearly equal in number ; and a bloody engagement ensued, in

which king Henry was in the thickest of the fight, while his valiant son, afterward Henry the Fifth, fought by his side, and though wounded in the face by an arrow, refused to quit the field.

“ Equal bravery marked their opponents. Hotspur was foremost in the paths of danger, and every where sought out the king, as the most noble object of his indignation. His intentions were however frustrated ; for in the heat of battle he was slain by an unknown hand, and the fortune of Henry once more prevailed.

“ On this day, it is asserted, two thousand three hundred gentlemen were slain, and six thousand private men.

“ This decisive action reduced Northumberland to submission, and after a time he received a pardon, the king probably thinking him sufficiently punished by the loss of his son.

“ While the king thus surmounted his public troubles, his private sorrows were very severe ; his son prince Henry gave in to the most disgraceful and dissolute

manner of living ; he was surrounded by a set of miscreants, who committed the most unlawful acts, and shared in their rapacities and riots, though on occasion, as at Shrewsbury, he had given the most striking proofs of his valour and conduct, and also in many instances of his generosity.

“ In the course of the excesses in which he was engaged, one of his depraved companions was brought to trial, before sir William Gascoigne, judge of the court of King’s Bench, who finding him guilty, committed him to prison, a decree which so highly exasperated the prince, that he struck the venerable magistrate, in the open court, who, in return, immediately ordered him, notwithstanding his rank, to be committed to prison for the offence.”

“ He acted nobly,” interrupted John. “ I long to hear how the prince behaved on the occasion.”

“ In a manner that greatly mitigated his error, for he modestly submitted to the

punishment, so that the king, when he heard the whole adventure, could not avoid exclaiming, ' Happy is the king who has a magistrate bold enough to execute justice upon such an offender, and yet more happy in a son, who having erred, yet feels himself amenable to the laws of his country.'

" The king did not long survive this event ; he was subject to fits, which terminated his life, in the fourteenth year of his reign, and the forty-sixth of his age.

" The king, previous to his death, admonished the prince of Wales to quit his evil courses, to live in friendship with his brothers, to rule with wisdom and moderation, and, above all, to love and serve God."

" Ah, papa," said John, " I fear when he had the entire power, and no one dared to control him, he soon forgot his father's commands."

" You judge too hastily, my dear boy ; to-morrow I will present you with a character worthy admiration ; for great in-

deed is the mind which can suddenly stop in the career of vice, when the power and means are unbounded to satisfy it. The distrustful temper of Henry the Fourth, excluded his son from business ; and his disposition, naturally warm and active, not being directed to useful objects, delivered itself over to the most unworthy passions ; but he was no sooner his own master, but his vices fled, or were changed into the contrary virtues ; but we must leave off this evening, as I am engaged.

“ Good night.”

CONVERSATION XV.

Henry the Fifth.

“ **HENRY** the Fifth began his reign in the year 1413. His features were handsome, his person tall and slender, and his limbs so active, that it is said, he would chase on foot, and take a wild buck.

“ One of the first acts of his reign, was to call together his former loose companions, whom he exhorted to change their licentious manner of living, and to imitate the reformation he himself had resolved on ; forbidding them to appear at court, until such amendment had taken place, but allowing them a small competence, until they should prove worthy of further encouragement.

“ His father's most experienced and faithful ministers, he placed in office the highest trust, and honoured

marked attention and confidence, sir William Gascoigne, who had before committed him to prison."

"Those actions make Henry appear so amiable," said Anne, "that we almost respect him the more, for having before erred."

"The observation is just," answered Mr. Wilmot, "as his conduct exhibited one of the strongest efforts of virtue. A life of uniform rectitude, though of all others most desirable and pleasing both to God and man, yet doth not excite that wonder and admiration, which a sudden and unexpected change from vice to virtue must occasion: nay, the Scripture says, there is more joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance; and the reason is obvious, fixed errors are seldom eradicated, so that when the human mind is capable of such an exertion, even angels rejoice.

"The conduct of Henry reconciled all parties; the Percys recovered their estates

and dignities, and the earl of March, treated with favour and distinction, bore the loss of his birth-right with moderation.

“ About this time, the doctrine of Wickliffe, who was a dissenter from the established church, began to spread, and received fresh lustre, from the protection and preaching of sir John Oldcastle, lord Cobham, a man distinguished for his services and military talents. Henry, desirous to support the established faith without violence, made many attempts to soften the inflexibility of Cobham, but in vain, and he at length suffered the primate to enter a prosecution against him; the result of which was that he was sentenced by the bishops to be burnt alive, as an heretic. Cobham, however, escaped from the Tower, and assembling his partisans, revolted against the king, but failing in his enterprise, fled. Many of his party were afterwards executed, but the greater number pardoned. Cobham, four years after, was taken, and put to death

in the most cruel manner ; being burnt, or rather roasted alive.

“ France was at this time distracted with internal troubles, which Henry resolved to take advantage of ; but was for a time prevented by a discovery that the earl of Cambridge, second son to the late duke of York, had entered into a conspiracy to place the earl of March on the throne. The leaders of this rebellion were put to death ; but the earl of March was pardoned, and Henry hastened to accomplish his designs against France.

“ He landed near Harfleur in Normandy at the head of six thousand cavalry and twenty-four thousand foot, and besieging the town, took it. But disease and famine soon ravaged his army, and speedily reduced it to scarcely a third of its original number, so that he was necessitated to attempt to retire to Calais ; but was immediately pursued by the French, whose army was nearly ten times the number of the English, who were sinking under the combined evils of fatigue, sickness, and

want; while on the contrary, the French were healthy, well supplied with provisions, and confident of success from their superior number.

“In this dilemma, Henry had no resource but conduct and courage, choosing therefore an advantageous ground on the plains of Agincourt, he resolved to give them battle.

“For a time, the armies kept silently gazing on each other, neither attempting to begin the contest; until at length, Henry cried out with a cheerful voice, ‘My friends, since they will not begin, let us set the example; come on, the blessed Trinity protect and guide us.’

“These words were the signal of assault, and the English, though enfeebled with disease, soon made up for the defect of their numbers, and the ravages of sickness, by the intrepidity of their valour, which speedily forced the French to give way; in short, in this memorable battle, the English were complete conquerors, losing only forty men, amongst whom

was the duke of York; while on the side of the French, there were slain ten thousand, and fourteen thousand made prisoners.

“This battle was followed by other successes and conquests: in addition to which, the internal dissensions and divisions, so distracted and perplexed the government, that the king of France found it highly necessary to enter into a negotiation, which terminated in a peace between the contending parties.

“The principal stipulations agreed on, were, that Henry should espouse the princess Catharine, daughter to the king of France. That Charles, her father, should enjoy his title and dignity during life, but that king Henry should be declared heir to the crown, and even at present be entrusted with the administration of the government. That France and England should ever be united under one king, but still retain their respective laws and privileges.

“Henry had thus attained the height

of worldly honour, when he was seized with a disease which ended his life, in the thirty-fourth year of his age, and the tenth of his reign ; he died near Paris, but his body was brought with all possible honour to England, and interred at Westminster."

"I am very sorry," said Frances, "that Henry died so soon, particularly as he became so good."

"My dear girl," said Mrs. Wilmot, "you ought rather to rejoice that so desirable a change had taken place, before he was called to his great account. His death would have been far more to be lamented, had he been cut off in the midst of his follies."

"Yes, mamma," replied John, "but we naturally are more interested and sorry for the death of a good man than for that of a bad one."

"True," answered Mrs. Wilmot, "but the reason is obvious, our contracted sight and knowledge builds too much on worldly good, and we neglect the more

material thought of eternal happiness. On calm reflection, who can lament a man snatched from sorrow, sickness, and all the wões human nature is subject to, and placed where sickness and sorrow never enter? On the contrary, who can avoid bewailing the wretched creature—who is cut off in the midst of his sins, horror-struck, and despairing; yet forced into the awful presence of a justly offended Creator?"

"Indeed," mamma," replied Anne, "'tis dreadful; and I hope, we that have the benefit of good example, shall not experience such an end."

"Heaven forbid you should; but your father will oblige us to continue."

Henry the Sixth.

"HENRY the Sixth succeeded to the crown in the year 1422; he was not a year old at his father's death, and the duke of

Bedford, one of the most accomplished princes of the time, was appointed protector during his minority.

“ The king of France died a few weeks after his son-in-law, and the dauphin, by the name of Charles the Seventh, was crowned at Poitiers, a step that again involved England and France in a war, which was followed by a revolution, effected by the most extraordinary means.

“ On the borders of Lorraine, lived a country girl, called Joan of Arc ; she had been servant at a small inn, was of an irreproachable life, and had hitherto displayed none of those enterprising qualities that afterwards distinguished her. She had long brooded on the miserable situation of her country, till her mind, too highly wrought with the subject, she concluded herself inspired by heaven to effect its freedom.

“ With those ideas, she repaired to the governor of Vaucour, and informed him of her mission ; he at first treated her as a lunatic, but her importunity at length pre-

veiled, and he conducted her to Chinon, where the French court then resided.

“ The French, sensible of their weakness, and willing to make use of every artifice to support their desperate fortunes, adopted the idea, and immediately gave out that Joan was actually inspired, that she had disclosed to the king some secrets which he thought known only to himself, and also had described minutely, a sword, kept in the church of St. Catharine of Firebois, which she had never seen, and requested to be put in possession of it.

“ With these, and such tales, the people were prepared to receive her ; when she was presented to them in a martial dress, and mounted on a charger.

“ Their next step was to send her against the English, who were then besieging the city of Orleans. Joan boldly promised to raise the siege, and to render herself still more remarkable, equipped herself with the identical sword of which she had before received such miraculous

notice. Thus prepared, she ordered the soldiers to clear their consciences by confession, before they set out, and displaying in her hand a consecrated banner, assured them of victory.

“ Such confidence on her side, aided by the supposition of supernatural assistance, raised the spirits of the French army, and depressed those of the English ; who, though they pretended to despise her efforts, were influenced by the general superstition ; and the siege, as she had predicted, was raised with great precipitation.

“ After this earnest of good fortune, her success was for some time rapid ; she caused the French king to be crowned at Rheims, but the events of war are ever variable, for throwing herself into Compeigne, which was then besieged by the duke of Burgundy, she made a sally with her usual courage, and twice repulsed the enemy, but was at length compelled to yield herself a prisoner.

“ The duke of Bedford, who com-

manded in chief, was no sooner informed of this event, than he purchased her of the count de Vendôme, whose prisoner she was, and committed her to close confinement; and whereas she had before been, by the credulity or art of the French, considered as a saint, she was on her captivity, by the same ignorance, treated by the English as a sorceress; and, being tried at Rouen, was found guilty of heresy and witchcraft, and condemned to be burnt alive; which sentence was executed with the utmost malignity.

“ From this period, the French gained ground, so that after the lapse of a few years, Calais alone remained of all the conquests England had made; and a truce was agreed upon by both parties.

“ When Henry was about twenty-three years old, he married Margaret of Anjou, daughter to the king of Sicily, a princess famed for beauty, genius, and courage, and who had been particularly selected for him as possessing an understanding capable of supplying the deficiency of his

own, which was known to be too weak for the high station he enjoyed.

“ Foreign war being extinguished, intestine strife soon took place; the weakness of Henry gave birth to faction; and a competitor stood forward to dispute the crown. This was the Duke of York, descended, by his mother’s side, from Lionel, one of the sons of Edward the Third, whereas the reigning king was descended from John of Gaunt, a younger son of the same monarch. The Duke of York, added to the right of birth, possessed great personal merit and considerable alliances, having married the daughter of the Earl of Westmorland, whose family was the most powerful in the kingdom. In this illustrious house, the Earl of Warwick was particularly distinguished for generosity and magnificence, and so opulent, that it is said he daily, on his different estates, entertained thirty thousand persons. The revolution was his work alone.

“ A singular event, at this period, shewed the disposition of the people;

king's domestics and one of the Earl of Warwick's, served as a pretence to renew the contention, and several engagements followed with various success, until at length the king was again made prisoner.

“ The Duke of York then, with great moderation, presented to the peers the evidences of his title to the kingdom, which were declared to be legal, and after some consideration, it was agreed, that, as King Henry had possessed the crown thirty-eight years, he should enjoy it during life, but that the duke should be the acknowledged heir, and in the meantime govern in the king's name.

“ The most powerful opposer to this arrangement was Margaret, who, possessed of masculine courage, rose superior to all fear of danger. She had taken refuge in Scotland, and afterwards raised troops in the north of England, to the number of twenty thousand men, at the head of whom she advanced to meet the enemy.

“ The armies met at Wakefield Green, where the Duke of York, whose force only amounted to five thousand men, imprudently hazarded a battle, the event of which was, that his army was defeated, himself slain, and his young son, the Earl of Rutland, falling into the hands of the conquerors, was inhumanly murdered in cold blood by the Lord Clifford.

“ Many prisoners of rank were afterward executed by martial law ; and the most atrocious acts were the result of the miseries of civil war.

“ The Earl of Warwick now put himself at the head of the Yorkists ; he was the first general of his time, brave in the field, and skilful in council, and bore the most inveterate hatred to the queen. He led about the captive King Henry, with his army, and gave the queen's forces battle at St. Albans, in which he was however defeated, two thousand of his followers slain, and the person of the king again fell into the hands of his friends.”

“ Dear papa,” interrupted Frances, “ there is nothing in this reign but continual wars, cruelty, and oppression.”

“ The observation is just,” replied Mr. Wilmot; “ as we proceed, we shall find our countrymen more polished, not but the scourge of foreign dissensions have ever remained, though, thank Heaven, the most dreadful of all, civil or internal wars, we have long been strangers to; of course the atrocious acts which disgraced the annals of our forefathers are no more.

“ Edward, eldest son of the late Duke of York, resolved to repair the losses his party had sustained, advanced towards London with the remainder of Warwick’s army, and, obliging Margaret to retire, entered the city amidst the acclamations of the people.

“ More daring than his father, and more certain of the attachment of the populace, who were dazzled by his shining qualities, he resolved to assume the regal title; to which purpose his friends harangued the multitude, and demanded

of them whether they would have Henry of Lancaster, or Edward son of the late Duke of York for their king. They declared for the latter, and a numerous assembly of the nobles and prelates confirmed their choice.

“ Edward, in consequence, was proclaimed in the capital. He was at this period in his nineteenth year, said to be one of the most personable men of his time, courageous, active, and witty; but these qualities were disgraced by licentiousness and cruelty.

“ Thus Edward gained possession of the crown on the 4th of March 1461, when Henry had reigned thirty-eight years, six months, and four days. I must now, my children, conclude for to-night; to-morrow I will renew the recital.”

“ My dear papa,” said John, “ I am impatient to hear of what became of King Henry and Queen Margaret.”

“ Their misfortunes continued for many years after Edward’s accession, and

are so interwoven with his reign, that I cannot immediately satisfy you."

"I am sorry for Henry," added John, "but it was shameful for him to be so inactive, and leave to his wife all the care of protecting his kingdom."

"She was a very bold woman," said Frances; "few have so much courage."

"It is not necessary they should; she was indeed particularly courageous and enterprising, and being wedded to a husband incapable of defending his possessions, she took the arduous task upon herself, not only upon his account, but likewise for the future benefit of her son."

"I have often thought," said Charles, "that it was a pity they could not have changed characters; the commanding, active bravery of Margaret would have well become Henry; and his mild, devout resignation and merciful disposition could not have failed to render her more estimable."

"I am glad," replied Mrs. Wilmot, "that you have at length remembered

some of Henry's virtues, for hitherto his weakness has only been spoken of. He is by all historians allowed to have been a good man; and though incapable of ruling, should not be condemned for what he could not help. Bravery and understanding, though to be improved, are not to be entirely acquired; they are primarily the gifts of nature, and though education and experience may increase, it cannot bestow them; to condemn Henry for weakness of intellect or pusillanimity is therefore unjust; for you might, with equal justice, blame a man for being born with a weak leg, as with a weak head."

"My mother's inference is true," said Anne. "I am convinced no situation could inspire me with courage to act like Margaret."

"Margaret's disposition, and the misfortunes that called it into action, were, as before observed, particular," said Mrs. Wilmot, "and I sincerely wish no wo-

man may hereafter be reduced to such masculine and unnatural exertions."

"Papa," said Frances, "Queen Margaret was not the only extraordinary woman for courage during that reign; Joan of Arc at least equalled her."

"My dear girl, I am rejoiced to hear you attend so much," replied Mr. Wilmot, "Joan of Arc was indeed her equal in valour, though their motives were widely different. Joan was an enthusiast in the cause of her country, and if she had any other incentive, it was most probably an ardent desire of fame, while Margaret's views were to confirm the crown of England to her husband and her posterity; but enough for to-night. I am at your service as early as you please to-morrow evening."

CONVERSATION XVI.

THE next day John and Frances entreating their father to continue the history, he immediately obliged them.

Edward the Fourth.

“ I have already told you that Edward on his accession in 1461 was only in his nineteenth year. The two implacable factions, known by the name of the red and white rose, the first attached to the House of Lancaster, the second to that of York, still deluged the land with blood; and Edward maintained his newly-gotten power by the most cruel atrocities. The intrepid Margaret collected in the north an army of sixty thousand men, and obliged the new king and the Earl of Warwick to hasten to oppose its progress.

On the eve of battle, Warwick, in the presence of his troops, killed his horse, and swore to share the danger of the meanest soldier. The armies met, and a battle was fought at Towton in the county of York, when Margaret's party, though by a third the most numerous, was defeated; and Edward ordering no quarter to be given, thirty-six thousand men remained on the field of battle, massacred by their fellow-citizens, while Henry, with his queen and son, fled into Scotland.

“ The conquering Edward next called a parliament, in which Henry, Margaret, the young prince, and their adherents, were declared enemies to the state.

“ Margaret, in the meantime, though defeated, was not dispirited, she obtained two thousand men from the King of France; and with these, some Scottish troops, and her former adherents, again gave Edward's forces battle, at Hexham, in Northumberland.

“ This encounter destroyed the small remains of hope in the queen's party,

who were cut to pieces, their leader, together with some of the first nobles in the kingdom being put to death, by martial law.

“Margaret, with her son, after her defeat, flying through a forest, was despoiled by robbers; from whose hands she had hardly escaped, when she encountered another villain, who advanced towards her with his drawn sword. Even in this danger, her courage did not fail, but with admirable presence of mind, presenting her son, she said, ‘Friend, I entrust to your care the son of your king, do not refuse to protect him.’ Though hardened with guilt, the robber was not able to withstand so strong a claim upon his humanity and honour, he led the queen and prince to a place of safety, from whence they afterward escaped to France. Henry remained a year concealed in Lancashire, but was at length discovered, and conducted prisoner to the Tower of London.

“Edward, by the assistance of Warwick, was now fixed upon the throne, his

title allowed by parliament, and the people universally submitted.

“Warwick advised him to marry, and with his consent went over to France, to procure the lady Bona of Savoy, for his queen; and the match was accordingly agreed on. But while the earl was employed in the negotiation abroad, the king rendered it abortive at home.

“Lady Elizabeth Grey, widow of Sir John Grey, waiting on him to intreat protection for her orphan children, he became enamoured of her, and after having in vain endeavoured to seduce her, offered her his hand in marriage, which she accepted.

“The tidings of this event, reaching Warwick, filled him with the most lively indignation; he felt himself insulted, and hastened home, where a number of malcontents joined a party he had formed to oppose Edward, who was thus threatened with a fresh storm.

“The duke of Clarence, king Edward’s brother, had married the earl of War-

wick's daughter, and both now openly declared against the king. The King of France also took advantage of the general discontent, to reconcile Warwick and queen Margaret; and though the father of the earl had been executed by the queen's command, and she herself recognised in him the effective spring and source of all her misfortunes, yet their mutual animosity was now cancelled by revenge on the one part, and on the other by the hope of dethroning Edward, and re-establishing Henry the Sixth.

“ Warwick's intention once known, in a few days sixty thousand men flocked to his standard. The king in precipitation marched against him, when the armies met near Nottingham, where a nocturnal engagement taking place, king Edward was reduced to flight, and Warwick remained master of the field. He immediately took Henry from his prison, and proclaimed him king.

“ Edward's party, though repressed, was not destroyed, and after an absence

of nine months, he landed at Ravenspur, in Yorkshire ; his army increased on his march, and on his arrival at the capital, the gates were opened to him by the citizens, and the wretched Henry was once more torn from his throne, and sent back to prison.

“ Warwick now resolved to end the suspense, by giving the king battle, near St. Albans ; in this, Edward’s fortune prevailed, for the duke of Clarence, at the head of twelve thousand men, abandoned his father-in-law, in the night, and went over to his brother’s camp. The Lancastrians were defeated, and Warwick himself, foremost in danger, fell in the midst of his enemies, covered with wounds.

“ The death of Warwick is said to have been the first event, during this long contest, which drew tears from the eyes of Margaret ; and yielding to her unhappy fate, she took sanctuary in the Abbey of Beaulieu, in Hampshire.

“ Margaret’s friends did not yet forsake her, several were still willing to as-

sist her fallen fortunes, and collecting a force, she once more gave king Edward battle at Tewksbury, which was the final termination of her attempts; the queen and prince in this contest being taken prisoners, and after the battle, brought into the presence of Edward.

“The young prince appeared before the conqueror, with undaunted majesty, and being asked how he dared invade England, replied, more mindful of his high birth, than of his ruined fortune, ‘I entered the dominions of my father, to revenge his injuries, and to redress my own.’

“The brutal Edward, enraged at his intrepidity, struck him on the face with his gauntlet, which action served as a signal for further violence; the king’s brothers, Gloucester, Clarence, and others, rushing like wild beasts, on the unarmed youth at once, and stabbing him to the heart. To complete the tragedy, Henry, who had long been a passive spectator of all these horrors, was now thought unfit

to live; and the duke of Gloucester, it is said, entering his chamber alone, murdered him in cool blood. Henry was forty-nine years old. Of all the distinguished prisoners taken in battle, none were suffered to survive but Margaret, who was afterwards ransomed by the king of France, for fifty thousand crowns."

As Mr. Wilmot paused, John said, "Dear father, I was too much interested to interrupt the narrative, but king Edward was a barbarian; and weak and despicable as I thought king Henry, he is by far a more respectable character."

"I fear," replied Mr. Wilmot, "that Edward will not become more estimable to you, as I continue his reign; but what say you, Frances, have you any observation to make?"

"I wish to know, papa, what afterward became of queen Margaret?"

"She retired to France, where a few years after, she died, having, by her courage, sustained her husband's cause,

in twelve pitched battles, and survived fortune, friends, and children."

"Poor Margaret," said Mrs. Wilmot, "though her character was so opposite to what we judge estimable and desirable in woman, yet it is impossible to be otherwise than interested for her; but as it is yet early, may we request you to continue?"

Mr. Wilmot immediately resumed his narrative.

"After so many scenes of savage barbarity, Edward gave himself up to the most unbounded licentiousness, and though he had married the woman of his choice, and was father to several children, disgraced himself, by seducing some of the wives and daughters of his subjects; among others, the wife of Shore, a goldsmith, of the city of London, a woman, who, though possessed of sense, as well as beauty, was weak enough to be fascinated by his offers, and to give up domestic happiness for the shadowy splen-

dor of a king's favour, and dignified disgrace.

“ Though the Duke of Clarence by betraying Warwick to join the king, had materially assisted in placing him upon the throne, yet the inconstancy of his character made the king view him with suspicion; and plotting with his brother Gloucester, his ruin was determined; the following circumstance formed a pre-
tence.

“ The king hunting in the park of Sir Thomas Burdet, a creature of the Duke of Clarence, killed a white buck, which was a great favourite with the owner; who, vexed at the loss, in the heat of passion, wished the horns of the deer in the belly of the person who had advised the king to kill him. For this exclamation, Burdet was tried for his life, and publicly executed.”

“ Dear papa,” interrupted John, “ I am astonished that such injustice was suffered.”

“ When power and tyranny are combined, what dire effects may they not produce !” replied Mr. Wilmot ; “ Edward’s cruelty did not stop here. The Duke of Clarence, upon the death of his friend, in the bitterness of grief, vented reproaches against his brother, and exclaimed against the iniquity of the sentence.

“ Enraged, or pretending to be so, at this liberty, the king ordered Clarence to be seized, caused him to be arraigned by his peers, and personally appeared as his accuser. The duke was found guilty, and all the favour allowed him, was to choose the manner in which he would die ; the choice was to be drowned in a but of Malmsey wine ; which was accordingly executed.

“ Had Edward’s life been prolonged, more atrocities might have disgraced it, but it pleased Heaven to cut him off, in the year 1483, in the forty-second year of his age, and the twenty-third of his reign. He left two sons, Edward, and Richard, and five daughters.”

"Papa," said Frances, "I cannot be sorry for Edward's death, his cruelty to poor King Henry's son, has made me detest him."

"Revenge and wanton cruelty, my dear child, disgraced both parties, for have you forgotten that the Lord Clifford, a partizan of Margaret's, was equally guilty in killing young Rutland, the son of York? an action that most probably was vindictively remembered in the barbarous retaliation."

"I had indeed, papa," replied she.

"The Earl of Warwick must have been a great man," said John, "for his power, at times, swayed both parties."

"He was. His interference was of that decisive nature, that it gained him the appellation of the *king-maker*, among the common people. His wealth was also so great, that he not only entertained numerous attendants on all his estates, but when he resided in London, we are told by an old historian, six oxen were consumed at the breakfast of his dependants and their

friends, every man having not only as much as he could eat, but also what he could carry away on his dagger's point."

"It is no wonder he was a favourite with the people," said Charles, "the greater part of those dependants were his soldiers, I suppose?"

"Most probably they were so, and his hospitality was repaid by their attachment; there are few minds but what are alive to gratitude."

"The valiant appear to interest you so entirely," said Mrs. Wilmot, "that I again must remind you of the unassuming King Henry, the sport of fortune, one day a king, the next a prisoner; he bore his lot with patience; and it is related, that being restored to the throne by Warwick, he nobly pardoned a man who had wounded him in the side, when he was a prisoner in the Tower; and some time before his death, being haughtily questioned why he had so long unjustly held the crown of England, he answered, 'My father was king, and quietly enjoyed his

crown, my grandsire was king, and I, even an infant in my cradle, was proclaimed king without dispute or interruption, holding my state for near forty years, in like manner as my ancestors had done before me; therefore, I may say with King David, the lot fell upon me in a fair ground, and my trust is from the Lord, who saveth the upright of heart.'

"Your mother is resolved," said Mr. Wilmot, "to make us thoroughly sensible of the merits of King Henry; I am ready to allow them, and can only be sorry he was not born in a private station, where activity and courage are not so ultimately essential; there his virtues might have been properly appreciated, and he would, most likely, have descended into the grave with peace and honour."

"I have no doubt," said Charles, "but that many who assisted in dethroning him were sorry, as well as Warwick, for the part they had acted; for Edward's character was not calculated to create esteem."

"It was not, neither were those of his

brothers, Clarence and Gloucester, more estimable ; that of the first was unsteady, vindictive, and treacherous ; that of the second, deceitful, cruel, and revengeful, and deterred by no means, however vile, to gain his purposes ; as it will be hereafter proved."

" Though Edward," replied Charles, " shewed so little remorse for the paternal feelings of Henry, he was, as historians say, on his death bed, particularly anxious for his own children, whom he warmly recommended both to the protection of his brother Richard, of Gloucester, and also to their relations by their mother's side, conjuring them to live in friendship and peace together."

" He did so," replied Mrs. Wilmot, " and to shew you the difference between our thoughts in high health and on a bed of death, among other things he said, ' Had I known the sorrow, loss, and trouble which a few years hath brought upon the kingdom, and which I pray God to forgive, I would have never won the

courtesy of men's knees, by the fall of so many heads.'

"We must now leave off for this evening," said Mr. Wilmot, "to-morrow we shall begin with the young king, Edward the Fifth."

CONVERSATION XVII.

Edward the Fifth.

"THIS prince was but thirteen years old, when he succeeded to the throne in 1483, his only brother, Richard Duke of York, was two years younger. The Duke of Gloucester, who had been declared protector of the realm, was of a disposition, at once cruel, ambitious, and capable of every crime, though he covered his deep and artful policy, under a mask of the most profound dissimulation. The Earl of Rivers, brother to the queen, had the care of educating the young king, and resided with him, on the borders of Wales, from whence the arts of Gloucester having removed him, he immediately caused the Earl of Rivers to be arrested. The queen, on receiving this intelligence, fled for sanc-

tuary to the abbey of Westminster, with her second son the Duke of York ; but as it was necessary to take from her so precious a trust, Gloucester, in council, complained of her unjust suspicion, and proposed to take the child forcibly from the asylum she had chosen. The prelates insisted that the sanctuary was inviolable ; but not divining the regent's designs, went to the queen, and solicited her to suffer her son to leave the sanctuary, pledging themselves for his safety. Fearing force might be used, she with the strongest reluctance at length consented, and bathing him with her tears, resigned him to the lord cardinal, saying, ' Farewell, my dear child, God keep you, let me kiss you yet once more before we part, for heaven only knoweth when we shall meet again.' So saying, she kissed him, blessed him, and wept bitterly.

" Beside the children of Edward the Fourth, there remained two of the unfortunate Duke of Clarence's, elder brother to the regent ; but what can deter the wretch

who tramples on all laws, both divine and human?

“ Possessed of the sole care of the young king and prince, he sent them to the Tower, caused the Earl of Rivers, and others of the queen’s relations, to be put to death, and entirely gained the Duke of Buckingham, who was an interested man, to enter into his projects. Lord Hastings, who was a faithful adherent to the young king, was not so easily seduced; it was therefore resolved to be rid of him by a new crime. Gloucester asked, in full council, what punishment those persons deserved who had attempted his life? to which Hastings unsuspectingly replied, they ought to suffer as traitors.

“ ‘Those traitors then,’ answered Gloucester, ‘are my brother’s widow, Jane Shore, his mistress, and their accomplices. Behold to what a state they have reduced me, by their witchcrafts,’ at the same time he shewed his arm, which was withered, though no one was ignorant that this misfortune had attended him from his birth.

‘ If they have committed this crime,’ answered Hastings, ‘ they cannot be too severely punished.’—‘ Do you talk to me of *ifs*,’ replied the protector; ‘ you, who are the chief abettor of their guilt? By holy Paul, I will not dine before your head is brought me.’

“ As he spoke, he struck on the table, and the instruments of his vengeance, who were prepared, entered; they seized on Hastings, and dragging him from the council, immediately beheaded him.

“ Jane Shore was afterwards examined, under a pretence of sorcery, but not being able to bring any proofs against her, she was condemned to do penance as an adulteress.”

“ Papa,” said Frances, “ I have heard of her; poor creature, she was starved to death !”

“ Not so, I should suppose,” answered Mr. Wilmot, “ for we find by Sir Thomas More, who was beheaded in the year 1537, that she was still living in his time, whereas, she did penance in or about the

year 1483, which was forty-six years before his death. He speaks of her in very wretched circumstances, and so changed with age and misery, that, to use his own words, ‘ you might as well judge of the beauty of one, long before departed, by their skull, taken from the charnel-house, as by her sunken features and shrivelled skin.’

“ We will hope,” said Mrs. Wilmot, “ that bodily afflictions were not alone the cause of the change ; sorrow and repentance I trust came hand in hand ; in which case, her personal loss was amply repaid by the gain of her immortal soul.”

“ All prepared,” resumed Mr. Wilmot, “ Gloucester openly aspired to the crown ; he spread doubts of the legality of his brother Edward’s marriage, and even defamed the character of his own mother, who was still living, by a supposition that the late king and the Duke of Clarence were unlawful children.

“ The mayor of London assembled the citizens, when Buckingham, after a

long and artful speech, proposed Richard Duke of Gloucester for their king; but a profound silence ensued; except from some few of Richard's creatures, who cried, 'Long live King Richard.' Buckingham thanked them as if the acclamation had been general, and soon after, with the mayor and aldermen, waited upon Richard, with an offer of the crown, which he pretended to accept with the utmost reluctance.

"Thus ended the reign of Edward the Fifth, which had lasted barely two months."

"My dear Sir," said John, "what a wicked man was Gloucester! I think I have heard he was very ugly and crooked."

"Sir Thomas More informs us he was so, though some historians are of a different opinion; but I trust you are too liberal minded to dislike him for personal defects. His crimes made him abhorred, and doubtless people saw him with such detestation that all his de-

fects were redoubled. But to proceed.

Richard the Third.

“ RICHARD was no sooner seated on the throne of his nephew, than he resolved to strengthen his usurpation by murder, and for that purpose, sent orders to the governor of the Tower; to put the young princes to death: but this man, whose name was Brackenbury, was too just to be made the instrument of a tyrant, and therefore firmly refused to embue his hands in innocent blood. A villain was however not long wanting; Sir James Tyrrel readily undertook the task, and Brackenbury was ordered to resign the keys of the Tower for one night. Tyrrel, choosing three associates, Slater, Deighton, and Forest, repaired in the night to the chamber where the princes were lodged, and sending in the assassins, ordered them to execute their com-

mission, while he himself stood without. The murderers finding the young princes in a sound sleep, suffocated them with the bolster and pillows, and having completed their iniquitous design, called Tyrrel to witness the act, who immediately ordered them to be buried deep in the ground at the stair-foot, under a heap of stones."

"Oh! dear papa," exclaimed Frances, crying, "is it possible any body could be so cruel to poor children who never injured them?"

"My good girl," said Mrs. Wilmot, "if you weep for the untimely fate of the princes, your tears are misplaced; rather weep for the unhappy wretches who embrued their hands in their innocent blood. The undefiled spirits of the children found a safe and sure refuge in the presence of their Creator, but what a prospect of horror was left for the murderers!"

"Sir James Tyrrel died for treason, by the hands of the executioner, in the

reign of Henry the Seventh," added Mr. Wilmot, "and for King Richard, he met part of his deserved punishment even on earth."

"Pray, papa, proceed," said John.

"Willingly. Richard's power, as he conceived, thus established, he was threatened from another quarter. Buckingham, who had been his firm friend, being refused some lands which had been confiscated, took disgust, and levied a body of men in Wales, and advanced towards Gloucester, but the continued rains, which had caused the river Severn to overflow, prevented their passage, and made a delay of ten days, during which period, Buckingham's army, almost perishing with famine, forsook him, and dispersed to their respective homes. In this situation, the duke had no resource, but to take refuge in the house of one of his former domestics, named Bannister, and who had received repeated obligations from his family. This man, unable to withstand

crimes, was still brave; he advanced to meet the enemy, and a battle took place at Bosworth in Leicestershire, in which Richard was slain, previous to which event Lord Stanley had taken a power of three thousand men from Richard's party, and joined the Earl of Richmond. On gaining the victory, the cry of 'Long live Henry the Seventh,' resounded from all quarters, and the crown of King Richard being found among the spoils of the field, was placed on the head of Richmond.

"The camp afterwards adjourned to Leicester, where the body of Richard was also brought; naked, and thrown over a horse, the head and arms hanging on one side, and the legs on the other, disfigured with blood and mire. In this condition it was taken to the Grey Friars church, and privately buried, when he had reigned two years, two months, and one day. The battle of Bosworth was fought on the twenty-second of August, 1485.

“ The reign of Richard,” continued Mr. Wilmot, “ affords a useful lesson for the ambitious ; to obtain the crown, he had broken through every tie of fraternity, honour, and humanity. But what did it avail ? the breath of the Almighty in a moment destroyed his greatness, and called him, without preparation, to his dreadful account.”

“ During the time he reigned,” said Mrs. Wilmot, “ I question whether he enjoyed one happy hour ; his fears and suspicions would haunt him by day, and the remembrance of his murders intrude in his dreams. It is said he always wore private armour under his clothes, and his hand was continually laid on his dagger ; that in the middle of the night he would start from his bed, and call his attendants ; and in short, by every action he evidently proved, that though he stifled humanity and honour, his conscience was still alive to all the horrors naturally attendant on such crimes as he had committed.”

“ Pray, papa,” said John, “ what right had the Earl of Richmond to the crown ? ”

“ That I shall inform you in our next conversation. A projected marriage between him and the Princess Elizabeth, eldest daughter to Edward the Fourth, strengthened his claim, and united the houses of York and Lancaster, commonly called the red and white rose.

“ These implacable factions had deluged the land with blood ever since the intrusion of Henry the Fourth, no less than eighty-five thousand six hundred and twenty-eight being slain in the different battles occasioned by this quarrel ; but which finally terminated by the death of Richard. But enough for this afternoon ; to-morrow I am at your service.”

CONVERSATION XVIII.

“**MY** dear papa,” said Frances, “I am impatient to hear how the Earl of Richmond acted when king; I was rejoiced to hear he gained the victory over the tyrant Richard.”

“I will immediately satisfy you,” replied Mr. Wilmot.

Henry the Seventh.

“**HENRY**, Earl of Richmond; was the son of Edmund Tudor, Earl of Richmond, whose wife, Margaret, was descended from a bastard son of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, by Catharine Rowat, or Swinford, first his mistress, afterward his wife; upon which marriage, the children were legitimated by act of parliament, by the name of Beaufort, in the reign of Richard

the Second, however, with an express restriction, that neither they nor their issue should succeed to the crown.

“ Immediately after the battle, 1485, Richmond’s victorious army, with unanimous and repeated shouts, hailed him king, from which time he took upon himself the regal style and authority; his title doubtless was liable to many exceptions, yet he ardently wished to ground his right as inheriting from the house of Lancaster, rather than from a stronger claim, an alliance with that of York, to which he was engaged by oath; he therefore put off his marriage with the Princess Elizabeth, heiress of that house, until the parliament should have adjudged him the succession; that he might not appear beholden to her for that right, he also resolved to be crowned before the parliament met, that he might not seem merely to hold the crown from their decision. However, not to displease the nation, whose intent was to unite the two contending houses, and thereby prevent all

further effusion of blood, he renewed his oath to marry Elizabeth, and sent for her up to London, from the castle of Sheriff Hutton, where Richard had confined her.

“ Such was the dread and hatred that Richmond bore to the house of York, that, as soon as possible after the battle of Bosworth, he sent also to the same castle, for the surviving male of that house, Edward Plantagenet, Earl of Warwick, son of the unfortunate Duke of Clarence, whom he confined in the Tower of London.

“ On the 30th of October, 1485, about two months after the battle of Bosworth, Henry was crowned: he at the same time appointed a band of fifty men to attend him, which are that body yet continued, and known by the name of Yeomen of the Guard; their number hath since been increased.

“ The marriage of Henry and Elizabeth took place on January 18th, 1486, to the great joy of the people; who expressed so much more satisfaction at this

event, than even at the king's entry, or at his coronation, that he appeared much mortified and displeased.

“ In September, their eldest son Prince Arthur was born, who was named after the famed British monarch by Henry, from whom he wished to be thought to have descended.

“ The Yorkists, who had so eminently assisted in raising Henry to the throne, now supposed that all party favour and distinction would cease; but the king was unhappily of another disposition, and not only behaved with coldness to the queen, but also, on all occasions, shewed great aversion to the whole York party, looking upon them with a jealous eye, which conduct was the source of most of the troubles with which this reign was afflicted.

“ A rumour had been for some time raised that the Duke of York, Edward the Fourth's youngest son, was still alive; this gave occasion for Richard Simon, a priest, to attempt imposing one

Lambert Simnel, a baker's son, upon the unwary multitude, for the said duke. However, soon after, a report being also raised that the Earl of Warwick had escaped from the Tower, the priest in consequence, changed his first plan, and instructed his ready pupil to personate the earl, for which purpose, he was conveyed to Ireland, where the deputy and chancellor, most likely at the instigation of the York party, acknowledged him for their sovereign, and accordingly he was proclaimed at Dublin, by the name of Edward the Sixth.

“ This proceeding could not fail of being vexatious to Henry, and the measures he took in consequence, did not prove conciliatory; for, probably, suspecting the queen, his mother-in-law, to be a party in the plot, he confined her for life, in Bermondsey monastery, Southwark, and seized upon her estate, though he pretended he did this, because she had before delivered her daughters into

Richard's hands; a step to which she was compelled by the exigency of the times."

"Indeed," said Frances, "if I had been King Henry's queen, my mother should not have been treated so."

"My good girl," replied Mrs. Wilmot, "you could not have prevented it, the power was alone vested in the king, whose hatred to the house of York extended, in some instances, even to his wife."

"Then," said Frances, "if I could not have saved my mother, I at least would have shared her confinement."

"Your reply, my dear child, shews the goodness of your heart, but such a determination, however filial and praise-worthy, would be difficult for a queen to effect. The queen of Edward the Fourth purchased her greatness at a very dear rate, and I make no doubt bitterly lamented the hour she gave up the name of Grey, to share the throne, for in the contentions which followed Edward's

death, her dearest connexions were destroyed. But to return to Simnel.

“ The first step which Henry took against this pretended Earl of Warwick, was to produce the real one, whom he caused to be publicly conducted in solemn procession through the streets of London; notwithstanding which, the Duchess of Burgundy, one of Edward’s sisters, an enemy of Henry’s, and of the house of Lancaster, resolved to assist the impostor, and willingly agreed to furnish him with 2000 German veteran soldiers, under the command of Martin Swart, to whom were joined the Earl of Lincoln and Lord Lovel. This body of men arrived in Ireland in May 1487, soon after which, the mock sovereign was crowned with much solemnity; they then sailed to England, where King Henry was prepared to receive them. On the 16th of June the two armies encountered at a village called Stoke, near Newark upon Trent, where, after a sharp engagement of three hours, the Germans, who fought with great ob-

stinacy, until the major part of them were killed or wounded, gave way, after which, their Irish allies ran off as fast as they could. The Earls of Lincoln and Kildare, and Martin Swart, were killed, and Lambert and the priest taken prisoners. Henry gave Simnel his life, employing him first in his kitchen, and then made him one of his falconers, a post which he retained till his death. The priest was imprisoned, and never after heard of. This insurrection was, upon the whole, not unprofitable to Henry, as it served him for a pretext to replenish his coffers, by the confiscation of the effects of divers persons accused of favouring the conspiracy.

“ Two years after Henry’s marriage, the queen was crowned, and the most remarkable occurrences of the five following years were the embassies and negotiations between Henry and Charles the Eighth, King of France, relative to the duchy of Bretagne, which the latter monarch had a mind to incorporate with his

own dominions, while Henry's whole study and policy was to make the affair turn, not to his kingdom's, but to his own private advantage. He therefore did not fail to represent to his parliament the danger of their quiet acquiescence to the meditated dismemberment of the duchy. His rhetoric had the desired effect, that of obtaining a very large subsidy, expressly granted for its defence; but Henry had in reality no such thing in view; he kept the money, and contented himself with treating with Charles about an accommodation, till in the end Bretagne actually became a fief of France.

“ Henry feigned to be greatly provoked at this, and, under pretence of invading France, obtained another benevolence from parliament; it is true, that Henry passed a large force to Calais, and besieged Boulogne, but this was only a blind, for even at that time articles of peace were actually agreed on, which, to save appearances, were however submitted to the opinion of his lords and gene

ral officers, who gave it under their hands that he ought to accept them. The treaty was accordingly signed, by which the King of France, who wanted peace with England, on account of other projects, agreed to pay Henry six hundred and forty-five thousand crowns. Thus ended the affair of Bretagne, which, considering what the parliament had given, was a very profitable settling of accounts for Henry, who, though he obtained a great deal of money, got very little honour in this business.

“ In June 1492, Prince Henry, who in due time succeeded his father, was born : this year is likewise remarkable on account of Columbus sailing to discover America ; a new pretender to the crown also sprung up, who had been for some time trained for that purpose, by the Duchess of Burgundy ; he was to personate the Duke of York, son of Edward the Fourth.

“ The young impostor’s name was Perkin Warbeck, the son of a converted

Jew at Tournay. Many great men who were either friends to the house of York, or disgusted with Henry, favoured the plot, particularly Sir William Stanley, to whom King Henry, in a great measure, owed his victory at Bosworth, Lord Fitzwalter, Sir Simon Montford, &c. These three were apprehended and put to death, but did not deter the Duchess of Burgundy from pursuing her project, for in 1495, Perkin was dispatched to England with some forces she had drawn together, with which he attempted to land on the coast of Kent. The Kentish men, however, took up arms against them, and cut them to pieces, except about one hundred and fifty, who were taken and hanged. Perkin, however, at this time, escaped and got back to Flanders, from whence he went to Ireland, and afterwards to Scotland, where James the Fourth publicly owned him for the Duke of York, and gave him the Earl of Huntley's daughter to wife; he also twice invaded England on his account, but without success, after

which, the Cornish men rebelling, sent for him thither, where he soon found himself at the head of three thousand men, with whom he marched to Taunton, his army being increased by the way, to six thousand; hearing, however, that the king was advancing in full force, he fled in the night, and took sanctuary at Bewley monastery, in the New Forest, where, being strictly watched, he was compelled to surrender on promise of life. He was then brought to London and exposed to public scorn and derision, but after some time, contrived to escape, though finding no means to leave the kingdom, he was again obliged to take sanctuary in the priory of Shene, where, at the intercession of the prior, his life was again spared, though as some punishment, he was for two whole days publicly exposed in the stocks. He was then carried to the Tower, where he plotted with the Earl of Warwick to make their escape, but the design being discovered, the king resolved to get rid of both: accordingly Perkin

Warbeck was hanged, and the Earl of Warwick beheaded on Tower-hill, in November, 1499. The death of this unfortunate prince brought a great odium upon the king, but that his excuse was, that Ferdinand of Arragon, for whose daughter he was then in treaty for his son Arthur, would not consent to the match, while the Earl of Warwick lived.

“ In 1501, Catherine, daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain, arrived, and her marriage with Arthur, Prince of Wales, took place. The Prince died about five months after, in the seventeenth year of his age, and the king's second son and successor was created Prince of Wales. In 1503, Henry's queen, Elizabeth, also died.

“ About this time the king began to oppress his subjects, by the means of two infamous ministers, Empson and Dudley, who stopped at nothing, however arbitrary or unjust, to fill their master's coffers. Henry's avarice also prompted him to project a marriage between his son Arthur's

widow, and his son Henry, to prevent the dowry of two hundred thousand crowns of gold being returned. Ferdinand's consent was easily obtained, and a dispensation from the Pope also procured without difficulty, but the match did not take place until the next reign.

“About the same time, the king's eldest daughter Margaret was married to James the Fourth, King of Scotland, from whom are descended our kings of the Stuart line.

“Little of any consequence, occurred during the remainder of this reign, which finally terminated on the 22d of April, 1509, the king having lived fifty-two years, and reigned twenty-three.

“In recapitulating the occurrences of this reign,” added Mr. Wilmot, “though we may find much to discommend, yet if compared with many that preceded it, the balance is greatly in its favour.

“Henry rendered his kingdom powerful and respectable in the eyes of foreign nations, and polished the manners of the

people as much as possible, for the time he lived."

"I am sorry he disgraced himself, by causing the Earl of Warwick to be put to death," said John, "it was very natural he should wish for liberty."

"It was so; he was but twenty-four years old at the time of his death, and had been a prisoner near the whole of his life. Historians report that he was so entirely unacquainted with the world, that he scarcely knew one animal from another, and was in his flight merely made the instrument of Warbeck's subtlety."

"History from this period becomes more interesting," said Charles, "for the arts which polish mankind began to diffuse themselves, the science of printing had taken place, navigation was improved, and commerce enriched the people."

"Henry's avarice was a very bad trait in his character," said John; "it was unpardonable to oppress the people for what he did not want."

"Avarice," replied Mr. Wilmot, "is

so despicable a vice, that whoever yields to it, can scarcely be honest ; for in the eagerness of grasping at all, they may sometimes seize on what is not their own. It also hardens the heart against every feeling of humanity, and closes it against every social enjoyment. The miser's thoughts are all absorbed in his gold ; he has no place for any other object ; he loves no man, and no man loves him ; he lives ridiculed and despised, and dies unlamented ; while his beloved gold, for which he has sacrificed so many blessings, frequently becomes the property of a spendthrift heir, who laughs at his predecessor's folly, while he lavishes in luxury and prodigality the sums accumulated by oppression and bodily mortification.

“So much for the miser,” said Mr. Wilmot ; “let us next consider the opposite character. The spendthrift lavishes without reflection, and his most generous actions are the mere ebullitions of the moment, for he has seldom opportunity

or inclination to consider deeply. Profuse without prudence or discrimination, he is often forced to commit meanness, which is the natural consequence of extravagance; and while he enriches the unworthy, frequently suffers the virtuous unfortunate to sink with want and sorrow. He is as little respected as the miser, for his pursuits also centre in self-gratification; and as the heirs of the first rejoice at his death, the heirs of the second hate his memory for leaving them to beggary and wretchedness."

"The picture is too true," answered Mrs. Wilmot; "it is a just medium alone in the use of wealth, which makes the possessors respected; every man, if possible, should live within his income, for the whole was not given for himself alone, while so many of his fellow creatures, by sickness, want, and various other causes, have claims on his bounty, and which it is his duty to fulfil, as far as is consistent with his fortune. A man who acts thus uprightly, lives respected, and dies la-

mented : for his family by his death lose a worthy principal, and the poor a ready friend."

"The duty of assisting the distressed," said Mr. Wilmot, "is not only inculcated by the Christian faith, but also by all others, who do not possess that advantage ; even in the Mahometan religion, it is recommended by various fables and allegories, among others one which I cannot refuse myself the pleasure of repeating. 'The supreme Judge will at the last day bind upon him who hath refused to give alms, a terrible serpent, whose sting will incessantly wound the griping hand that was shut to the unfortunate.' But enough for this evening ; good night, my dear children."

CONVERSATION XIX.

THE party being as usual assembled, Mr. Wilmot, addressing his younger children, said—"I have now, my dear John and Frances, reached one of the most eventful periods in English history, the reign of King Henry the Eighth, who was the instrument in the hand of God, designed to curb the unbounded power and pride of the priests, and to take the leading steps which finally conducted to our glorious Reformation. Persecution for the sake of religion did not indeed cease in this reign, but its instigator, the bloody monster superstition, received a blow, which she never after recovered; and though you will learn as I proceed, that she again reared her sanguinary standard in the reign of Mary, eldest

daughter to Henry the Eighth, yet the blood of the martyrs and holy men that was then shed, far from eradicating the truth, fixed it irrevocably in many hearts, which, but for witnessing what good men dare suffer in a just cause, had, perhaps, never been awakened to it."

"Papa," said John, "will you be good enough to begin?" "Willingly."

Henry the Eighth.

"On the death of King Henry the Seventh, in 1509, he was succeeded by his only son, Prince Henry, in the eighteenth year of his age. On the day after his father's death, he ordered Empson and Dudley, who had been the emissaries of his father's extortions, to be committed to prison, and soon after sacrificed them to the public hatred, though in their con-

demnation, less regard was had to the strict rules of justice, than to the desire of satisfying the people.

“ In his choice of ministers, he selected such as had most faithfully served his father, and, as speedily as possible, obeyed his will in marrying the Princess Catherine of Spain, his brother's widow. Henry loved festivity and pleasure, and proportioned his expences to the treasures which his father had left him ; learning and music were his first delights, and all seemed to presage a peaceful and glorious reign ; but the characters of men are only to be developed by time and circumstance.

“ Henry had an army of fifty thousand men, and, as a war with France was ardently wished for by the people, he resolved to invade it. France was not threatened by Henry alone, the Swiss, and also Ferdinand of Arragon, were only waiting a favourable opportunity to assail it, so that the French monarchy was never in a more distressed situation.

“ After an ostentatious but ineffectual

campaign, in which the errors of the assailants procured the safety of France, a truce was concluded between the two kingdoms; and Mary, the king's sister, married Louis the Twelfth of France.

“ This arrangement concluded, gaiety in great measure engrossed Henry's time, and repeated expenditures exhausted his treasures. His old ministers who did not concur in his projects, he neglected to consult, and chiefly confided in the councils of Thomas, afterwards Cardinal Wolsey, who flattered his inclinations, and yielded to whatever scheme his impetuous temper was inclined to. This man was the son of a private person at Ipswich, and sent to Oxford at an early age, where his attention to learning was so great, that he was a bachelor of arts at fourteen, and rising by degrees from one preferment to another, he at length obtained the rank of first minister of the state.

“ Wolsey, though near forty and a churchman, having used every art to suit himself to the caprice of the king,

acquired the height of power, and began to shew his real character. He was insatiable in his acquisitions, but magnificent in his expences, ambitious of power, but yet more desirous of glory ; at times in his manner engaging, insinuating, and persuasive ; at others, lofty, commanding, and haughty ; liberal to his friends and dependants, and a kind master to his domestics.

“ The nation saw with displeasure the benefices heaped on Wolsey, who enjoyed at the same time the archbishopric of York, and the bishoprics of Durham and Winchester ; sharing also the revenues of several other sees. To these he joined the dignity of Cardinal : and his household was composed of eight hundred persons, among whom were many of the principal gentlemen of the kingdom. He was the first ecclesiastic who wore habits of gold or silk ; the cross of York was always carried before him, and so improperly was he elated with his greatness, that the Archbishop of Canterbury writing to him,

and signing his letter, *your loving brother*, he complained of the signature as an affront. The primate, informed of this complaint, replied coolly, ‘ Alas ! know ye not that this man is drunk with too much prosperity ? ’

“ At this period the impositions of the church of Rome had attained their utmost height. Leo the Tenth was then pope, and employed in building the church of St. Peter at Rome. In order to procure money for carrying on that expensive undertaking, he gave a commission for selling indulgences, a practice that had often been tried before.”

“ Papa,” interrupted John, “ will you please to explain what those indulgences were meant for ? ”

“ Undoubtedly ; for a sum of money they were to free the purchaser from the pains of purgatory or punishment hereafter, so that they might commit the grossest crimes with impunity. These abominable impositions were publicly sold, but most particularly at taverns and gaming-houses,

as doubtless, in such places they were most wanted. A man might not only buy for himself, but for his friends, if they felt inclined to violate any of their duties to God or their fellows, and be secure from the forfeiture annexed by the gospel to such deeds."

"I have frequently wondered," said Charles, "how it was possible, even in the darkest ages, that men could be found ignorant enough to give credit to such folly, which was at once an insult to Heaven and to common understanding."

"Such a belief was doubtless the offspring of superstition," replied Mr. Wilmot, "and calculated particularly to impose on weak minds; for none else could believe that the prayers of one man, though a priest, could redeem another from the just anger of an offended God;—but to proceed. Martin Luther, professor in the university of Wirtemberg, and an Augustine monk, first preached against the folly and inefficacy of these indulgences; and being naturally of a warm temper, and pro

voked by the opposition shewn his doctrine, he proceeded farther, and attacked the pope's authority and the general corruption of the church of Rome. This first gave rise to the Reformation, which in a little time spread through many parts of Germany, Luther being powerfully supported against the pope, and his other enemies, by the Elector of Saxony, his sovereign.

“ Among the defenders of indulgences, was King Henry the Eighth, who wrote a book against Luther, intitled, “The Seven Sacraments,” and which being presented to the pope, he bestowed on Henry the title of *Defender of the Faith*, which title being afterwards confirmed by parliament, the kings of England have ever since borne it. However deep might have been the king's reasoning on the subject, Luther was neither silenced nor dismayed, but in return, in his answer, treated Henry with as little ceremony, as he had before done the pope. The king had now been eighteen years married to Catherine of

Arragon, and the period had arrived which was doomed to produce a change the least of any to be expected. Catharine was six years older than himself, and having been first espoused to his brother, some scruples had been raised concerning the legitimacy of her second marriage, notwithstanding a dispensation had been obtained from the pope. Of three children which Catharine had borne to Henry (two boys and a girl) only the Princess Mary survived, a circumstance, which, though natural, the king pretended to suppose was the effect of the displeasure of Heaven, occasioned by the unlawfulness of his marriage with his brother's widow. His real motive may, however, in all probability be attributed to another source; among the maids of honour who attended the queen, was Ann Boleyn, daughter of Sir Thomas Boleyn, a gentleman of an ancient and noble family. The beauty of this lady surpassed, in the king's eyes, that of any woman he had ever seen; and her education, which had been at Paris, con-

spiring to assist her natural wit and vivacity, they exceeded even her personal charms. Henry, who had never learnt the art of restraining his passions, first endeavoured to seduce her to his criminal desires ; but finding the effort vain, he resolved, if possible, to procure a divorce from Queen Catharine, and marry her. In order to effect this change, Henry pleaded his remorse of conscience for having lived so long with his brother's wife, and prayed the pope, Clement the Seventh, to dissolve a marriage at once displeasing to Heaven, and painful to himself, as it obliged him to act against its dictates. Clement, who was under many important obligations to Henry, and also to the Emperor Charles the Fifth, who was nephew to Queen Catharine, knew not how to act in this dilemma ; but unwilling to grant, and afraid to refuse, he continued to promise, recant, dispute, and temporise, hoping to weary the king's patience, and make him give up his intention. He was in this

case mistaken. Henry was too much interested to suffer the plan to take effect : he had at first expected to find a warm supporter in Wolsey, but was deceived ; for the cardinal was in nearly the same perplexity with the pope ; on one hand he wished to satisfy the king, and on the other was afraid of incurring the pope's displeasure, who had the immediate power of punishing his disobedience. He therefore endeavoured to remain neuter in the business, and though in all other disputes, he had acted with the most haughty obstinacy, yet on this occasion, he pretended the utmost deference to the opinion of Cardinal Campegio, who was the pope's nuncio in England to settle the affair. Henry saw the conduct of Wolsey with great displeasure, but concealed his resentment, till he could act with more fatal certainty."

" The person who most interests me," said Mrs. Wilmot, " is Queen Catharine, who being cited, as was also the king, before the legates appointed for that purpose,

she threw herself at the king's feet, and in the most pathetic and affectionate terms, appealed to himself for her irreproachable conduct, during near twenty years that she had been his wife ; that she had only become such by the will of his father Henry the Seventh, and of her's, Ferdinand the Catholic, and that her marriage was finally sanctioned by the pope. That to Heaven and his holiness, she left the justice of her cause, resolved never to submit to the decree of partial or interested judges ; nor ever more to appear in the court on such an occasion. Henry readily testified the truth of what she advanced, but his scruples of conscience were, as he pretended, not to be removed."

"The king," resumed Mr. Wilmot, "having selected Thomas Cranmer, a man of talents and integrity, a doctor of divinity, and fellow of a college in Cambridge, to succeed Wolsey, appeared less reserved in his resentment against that prelate. He ordered the attorney-general to prepare a bill of indictment against

him, and soon after commanded him to resign the great seal, which was given to Sir Thomas More. He was then ordered to abandon his palace at York-Place, and all his plate and furniture were confiscated to the king's use. On an inventory being taken, they were found to exceed even the most extravagant surmises. Of fine holland alone, was a thousand pieces; the walls of his house were hung with cloth of gold and silver; he had a cupboard full of massy gold plate, and the rest of his furniture was of equal richness. Wolsey was soon after arrested by the king's command, for high treason, and preparation was made to conduct him from York, where he then resided, to London, to appear as a criminal, where he so lately possessed almost kingly power. At first he refused to submit to the mandate; but the Earl of Northumberland, who had the conducting of the business, being peremptory, he was forced to comply. On his journey, which was made by easy stages, he stayed a fortnight at the Earl of Shrews-

bury's, where one day after dinner, he was taken ill: he, however, after a day or two proceeded on his journey; but his sickness and weakness increasing, reached no farther than Leicester Abbey, where the monks coming out to receive him in the most honourable manner, he said, 'Father Abbot, I am come to lay my bones among you,' and immediately requested his bed to be prepared.

"Wolsey died the third day after; some short time before he expired, he said to Kingston, one of his guards, 'I pray you commend me to my royal master, and entreat him to call to his remembrance all that hath hitherto passed between us—alas, if I had served my God as diligently as I have served my king, he would not have left me in my grey hairs a prey unto mine enemies.'"

"Papa," said John; "the life of Thomas à Becket, and Wolsey, are somewhat similar."

"My good boy, your observation pleases me; both Becket and Wolsey rose

by their attention to learning to the highest dignities, and unbounded pride wrought the fall of both."

"True," replied Charles, "but Wolsey appears to me a more estimable character than Becket: as he did not by his insolence insult the king his master, or endeavour to turn his subjects against him."

"He did not," said Mr. Wilmot, "but his rapacity and pride afforded an easy pretence for his destruction, and his great riches were a strong temptation to such a monarch as Henry, who knew no pangs of conscience, where his inclination or convenience suited!"

"Wolsey's life, which had been a constant repetition of ambition and meanness, terminated by a death of remorse, and the tie which bound Henry to the church thus broken, he resolved to keep no measures with the pope, and by the advice of Cranmer, resolved to consult all the universities of Europe on the legality of his marriage. The decision of those

of France, England, and even Italy, were, by interest or purchase, in his favour, and though the pope still persisted in commanding the king to appear before him, either personally, or by proxy, he peremptorily refused to be judged at Rome, where he had nothing to hope.

“ These disputes tended to the ruin of the Romish church, as the respect of the people for the pope’s authority weakened daily, and the more opposition the king met with, the more he was disposed to remove every obstacle which crossed his wishes.

“ During this interval, Anne Boleyn was created Marchioness of Pembroke, and privately married to the king ; Dr. Cranmer, raised to the see of Canterbury, pronounced the sentence of divorce, which could not be obtained from Rome, and Anne was solemnly crowned queen. She was afterwards mother to Elizabeth, whom the king immediately created Princess of Wales. This step was followed by the pope’s declaring the first marriage

of Henry lawful, and pronouncing a sentence of excommunication against him, if he persisted in the divorce.

“ All measures thus broken between the king and the pope, it naturally followed that several must fall a sacrifice between ancient establishments, and modern reformation. The king was declared, by parliament, the head and protector of the church of England; the clergy were necessitated to acknowledge the same, and the marriage of Henry with Anne Boleyn was ratified anew, and the succession to the crown by oath acknowledged to belong to their posterity. Sir Thomas More, one of the greatest men of his time, and Bishop Fisher, scrupling to take this oath, were sent to the Tower, and persisting in their refusal, were afterwards executed.

“ As the monks had long shewn great reluctance to the new arrangement, the king resolved to deprive them of all power to injure him, and accordingly, as head of the church, sent commissioners into

the several counties of England, to inspect the monasteries, and to report the conduct of such as resided in them. Nothing was more easy than to find real abuses and disorders ; but passion supposed more than really existed ; doubtful evidences were taken for certainties, and calumnies passed for proofs. The account of this visitation was published, in order to render the monasteries odious to the nation, and soon after three hundred and seventy-six religious houses were suppressed at one blow, and the property and lands confiscated to the king's use.

“ During these transactions, died Catharine of Arragon, Henry's first wife ; before her death she wrote him a letter, which on reading touched him even to tears.

“ Another visitation of the monasteries taking place, and many frauds respecting images and relics being discovered, they were brought out of the convent and publicly burned, and among others, those of

Thomas à Becket, whose rich shrine was seized for the king's use. The number of monasteries suppressed from first to last, were six hundred and forty-three, ninety colleges, two thousand three hundred and seventy-four chantries and chapels, with one hundred and ten hospitals, and the yearly value of all confiscated to the king's coffers.

“ Among the principal friends of the Reformation, were Queen Anne Boleyn, Archbishop Cranmer, and Thomas Cromwell, afterwards created Earl of Essex, who though only a blacksmith's son, and one of Wolsey's domestics, was in high credit with the king; for Henry himself, though he had quite thrown off the pope, yet he strictly adhered to the old popish religion all his life, at the same time he was extremely jealous of his supremacy, and an enemy to the papal authority, and having gained arbitrary power, passed what laws he pleased, and put them in execution without mercy. Papists and protestants were

hanged or burned together ; the first for denying the king's supremacy, the latter for what was called *heresy* ; the king being resolved that his own belief should be the standard for that of his subjects.

“ The king had been married to Anne Boleyn about three years, when the enemies of the reformation found means to inspire him with jealousy, which ended in her ruin. Accustomed to yield implicitly to his most improper wishes, he had taken an inclination to Jane Seymour, maid of honour to the queen. Anne Boleyn, I have before said, had been educated in France, and naturally of a cheerful temper, might be guilty of indiscretions, without design or criminal intention... Calumny converts the most indifferent actions into a crime, and is but too greedily listened to where it flatters the passions, thus the king was easily persuaded to believe his wife was unfaithful, when he wished to find her so. She was accused of various adulteries, and among others of an improper familiarity with her own brother,

Viscount Rochford. The Duke of Norfolk, her opponent, from his attachment to the popish faith, took care to produce witnesses against her, and being sent to the Tower, she afterwards, as well as those with whom she was accused, was brought to trial. When first arrested, she solemnly declared her innocence, and wrote a letter to her tyrant husband, capable of softening any heart less prejudiced and cruel than that of Henry."

"Excuse my interrupting you," said Mrs. Wilmot, "but it may perhaps gratify your auditors to hear that letter, and I have it as copied from an ancient collection."

All requesting their mother to oblige them, she sent for it from her portfolio, and read as follows:

*Queen ANNE BOLEYN to King HENRY
the Eighth.*

"SIR,

"Your grace's displeasure and my imprisonment are things so strange unto me,

that what to write, or what to excuse, I am altogether ignorant, whereas you send unto me (willing me to confess a truth, and so obtain your favour) by such a one you know to be mine ancient professed enemy. I no sooner received this message by him, than I rightly conceived your meaning, and if, as you say, confessing a truth may procure me safety, I shall with all willingness perform your commands.

“ But let not your grace ever imagine that your poor wife will ever be brought to confess a fault, where not so much as a thought thereof proceeded—and to speak a truth, never prince had wife more loyal in all duty, and in all true affection, than you have ever found in Anne Boleyn, with which name and place, I would willingly have contented myself, if God, and your grace’s pleasure had been so pleased; neither did I at any time so far forget myself in my exaltation, or received queenship, but that I have always looked for such an alteration as I now find; for

the ground of my preferment, being on no surer foundation than your grace's fancy, the least alteration, I knew, was fit and sufficient to draw that fancy to some other object—you chose me from a low estate to be your queen and companion, far beyond my desert or desire; if then you found me worthy of such honour, good your grace, let not any light fancy, or bad council of mine enemies, withdraw your princely favour from me, neither let that stain, that unworthy stain of a disloyal heart, towards your good grace, ever cast so foul a blot on your most dutiful wife, and the infant princess your daughter. Try me, good king, but let me have a lawful trial, and let not my sworn enemies sit as my accusers and judges—yea let me receive an open trial (for my truth shall fear no open shame), then shall you see either mine innocence cleared, your suspicions and conscience satisfied, the ignominy and slander of the world stopped, or my guilt openly declared; so that whatever God or you may determine for

me, your grace may be freed from open censure, and mine offence so lawfully proved, your grace be at liberty, both before God and man, not only to execute worthy punishment on me, as an unlawful wife, but to follow your affection already settled on that party, for whose sake I am now as I am, and whose name I could some good while since have pointed out to your grace, being not ignorant of my suspicions therein ; but if you have already determined for me, and that not only my death, but an infamous slander, must bring you to the enjoyment of your desired happiness ; then I pray of God that he will pardon your great sin, and likewise mine enemies the instruments thereof, and that he will not call you to a strict account for your unprincely and cruel usage of me, at his general judgment-seat, where both you and myself must shortly appear, and in whose judgment I doubt not (whatever the world may think of me) mine innocence shall be known, and sufficiently cleared. My last and only re-

quest, shall be that myself may only bear the burthen of your grace's displeasure, and that it may not touch the innocent lives of those poor gentlemen, who, as I understand, are likewise in strict imprisonment for my sake. If ever I found favour in your sight, if ever the name of Anne Boleyn hath been pleasing to your ear, then let me obtain this request, and I will so leave to trouble your grace, further than with my earnest prayers to the Trinity, to have your grace in true keeping, and to direct you in all your actions.

"From my doleful prison in the Tower, 6th of May, 1536.

"Your most loyal and

"ever faithful wife."

"Mamma," said John, as Mrs. Wilmot concluded, "on receipt of this letter, Henry surely sent for the queen, and was very sorry for what he had done against her."

"Henry's heart was too depraved to make so noble an effort," replied Mr.

Wilmot. "He had cast off his first wife, and cut off the inheritance of her daughter without remorse, and was not inclined to be more favourable to his second, when she had outlived the whim that attached him to her."

"Papa," said John, "I am quite disappointed. Before you began this reign, as you said King Henry was the instrument designed by Providence to bring about our glorious reformation, I expected he was at once a great and good man."

"You judged erroneously. It is not always great or good men that Heaven selects for extraordinary purposes, an example that was strongly verified in the case of Henry, whose quarrel with the pope brought about suddenly what otherwise might have taken many years to effect. To me such events are instances of the power and wisdom of God, who can turn the most adverse means to the accomplishment of his will."

"The fate of Anne Boleyn," said Mrs. Wilmot, "presents a useful lesson

to young women, particularly to those who are advanced to a rank beyond that where they were originally placed. The gaiety of manners she had acquired in France, though, I have no doubt, perfectly innocent, furnished her enemies with a pretence to ruin her with the king."

"She was naturally cheerful," answered Anne, "and it must be particularly hard to live in a constant state of restraint."

"I allow the justice of the observation," replied Mrs. Wilmot, "but she was well acquainted with the character of Henry before she married him, and should have studied his humour, which, proud, vindictive, and overbearing, could no more endure a sharer in his wife's smiles than in his regal authority."

"Heaven keep us from such characters!" replied Charles; "she naturally expected an affectionate husband, not an imperious master."

"Unequal marriages are seldom hap-

py," said Mr. Wilmot; " Anne Boleyn doubtless considered her youth and beauty an ample compensation for her greatness, while Henry, on his part, thought the obligation scarcely ever to be sufficiently repaid."

" Papa," interrupted John, " I am impatient to hear how the queen's imprisonment terminated."

" To-morrow I will satisfy you. Our conversation has been sufficiently long this evening.—Good night, my dear children."

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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